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THE
GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

We must preach more upon the great texts of the Scriptures, the tremendous passages whose vastnesses almost terrify us as we approach them.

J. H. JOWETT.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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"THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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THE CREATION AND THE CREATOR.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.—Gen. i. 1.

THIS is a sublime sentence with which the Bible opens. Will the sentences that follow be in keeping with the musical throb and stately massiveness of these opening words? Even when we regard the book simply as a monument of literature we find it impossible to conceive a more appropriate introduction than this: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Yet the end is not less majestic than the beginning: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away."

¶ How should we approach the study of a book which opens and closes with words of such sublimity? There is a sentence or two in the preface to John Wesley's first volume of sermons, in which the great evangelist gives us the secret of his method of Bible-study. "Here am I," he says, "far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His Book; for this end—to find the way to heaven. Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift my heart to the Father of Lights. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. And what I thus learn, that I teach." To Wesley, then, there were two great realities—the visible *Book*, and its invisible but ever-present *Author*; and to a man of his training and susceptibilities the one would have been an enigma without the other. He saw *God* at the beginning of every section of Holy Scripture.

Let us attempt to explain this great but difficult text by considering—

I. THE CREATION.

i. The meaning of "In the beginning," and of "the heaven and the earth."

ii. The idea in the word "created."
iii. Other explanations of the origin of the world.
iv. In what sense God continues to create.

II. THE CREATOR.
i. What does Creation tell us about the Creator?
ii. What other works of God follow from Creation?
1. Providence.
2. Redemption.
iii. Three things in Creation to encourage us.

I.

THE CREATION.

i. Two Phrases.

1. "*In the beginning*" does not mean here "from all eternity." There is no "beginning" in eternity. It means in the beginning of the existing universe as conditioned by *time*. The expression is used in precisely the same sense in the prologue of St. John's Gospel, the difference between the opening of Genesis and the opening of the Fourth Gospel being due to the use of the verbs. In the beginning—that is, of the things which we see and among which our human history unfolds itself—God *created* the universe. In the same beginning the Word *was*, as existing from all eternity. *When* the beginning was we are not told; it may have been thousands or millions of years ago; but there was a beginning. Matter is not eternal.

¶ When I was a student at college, the standard book on divinity which was put into our hands was Bishop Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed*, in which it was laid down as quite an authoritative statement that heaven and earth were created most certainly within not more than six, or, at the farthest, seven, thousand years from the age in which we were living. Astronomers who have gone into this question, however, now say that the time when the moon became separated from the earth—an event which might be regarded as the commencement of the earth's history—could not be placed at any period less than fifty-seven millions of years ago. Even the historians find records of men living in a high state of civilization more than eight thousand years ago—and that state of civilization must itself have taken long centuries for its development. Similarly, the geologist,

when he tries to read the book of Nature, finds, in the relics of the river-drift man, evidences that man had existed on this earth more than twenty thousand years.[1]

2. "*The heaven and the earth*" does not mean the chaotic mass, the rough material, so to speak, but the whole cosmos, the universe as it appears in its present order. This is the common mode of expression in Hebrew for what we call the universe. The nearest approach to this idea of "universe" is found in Jer. x. 16, where the English versions have "all things," the Hebrew being literally "the whole." Taking the first verse as complete in itself, we have here the broad general statement of creation; then follows the early dark, empty, lifeless condition, not of the whole, but of the earth; and then the gradual preparation of the earth to be the abode of man. The history of the visible heavens and earth is bound together throughout Scripture till the final consummation, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, to make way for the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

¶ The conception which we express by the term "universe" is usually expressed in the Old Testament by this phrase, "the heaven and the earth." But there is a still more complete expression: "heaven above, earth beneath, and the water under the earth" (Ex. xx. 4). A similar phrase is found on the Assyrian Creation-tablet: "the heaven above, the earth beneath" (line 1), and "the ocean" (line 3).

ii. The Idea in Creation.

It cannot be proved that the word translated "created" means etymologically to create out of nothing. It is common to all the Semitic languages, and may be connected either with a root meaning "to cut" and "fashion by cutting," the material so cut or fashioned being already in existence; or perhaps with a root signifying "to set free," "to let go forth," "to cause to appear." It is in favour of this latter derivation that the word is never followed, like other words denoting "to form," "to fashion," and the like, by the accusative of the material out of which the thing is fashioned. (See the striking use of the word in Num. xvi. 30, "If Jehovah should create a creation.") But the word, whatever

[1] J. Lightfoot.

be its derivation, is never used except of a Divine act; and it is quite certain that the writer intends to convey the impression of a creation called into existence out of nothing by the voice and will of God. "In the beginning God created." Before "the beginning" no material thing existed. God called all that is into existence. This is the sense in which the words were understood by the earliest commentators, the Hebrew poets. So in Ps. xxxiii. 9, "For he spake, and it was" (came into being); and Ps. cxlviii. 5, "He commanded, and they were created." So, too, in the Epistle to the Hebrews xi. 3, "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear." The creation, then, was no operation wrought upon pre-existent matter, neither is it an emanation from a Divine substance. The Hebrew cosmogony has no tinge in it either of dualism or of pantheism. God is the eternal, self-subsistent Being; "He is before all things, and by him all things consist." Moreover, on its first page the Hebrew Scripture asserts clearly the unity of the Godhead. There are no rival deities here, each exercising an independent power, and claiming separate worship: God is one.

¶ The idea in the word cannot be defined with precision, but the following points are to be noted: (*a*) the most important fact is that it is used exclusively of *Divine* activity—a restriction to which perhaps no parallel can be found in other languages. (*b*) The idea of *novelty* or *extraordinariness* of result is frequently implied, and it is noteworthy that this is the case in the only two passages of certainly early date where the word occurs. (*c*) It is probable also that it contains the idea of *effortless* production (such as befits the Almighty) by word or volition (Ps. xxxiii. 9). (*d*) The facts just stated, and the further circumstance that the word is used always with accusative of product and never of material, constitute a long advance towards the full theological doctrine of creation out of nothing, and make the word "create" a suitable vehicle for it.[1]

¶ This is not a philosophical account of the Creation. There is no such thing in the Bible. Wisdom, among the Israelites, developed herself in quite a different direction from the philosophy of the Greeks. She did not give herself up to speculations upon the origin and nature of things. This one word, resplendent with light, lying at the foundation of all the Jewish conceptions, set

[1] J. Skinner, *Genesis*, 15.

their minds at rest upon these matters: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Hence the greater minds among the Jews directed their thoughts to the problems of practical life. The result of these labours is given us in five books, which form, as it were, the code of the Hebrew wisdom. The subjects treated in them relate, not to the study of Being, but to the purely practical question of *right living*; they even exhaust it. These books are—Job, in which is revealed the art of *suffering* well; the Psalms, which give us a model of true *prayer*; Proverbs, in which is taught the art of *acting* rightly in all circumstances; Ecclesiastes, which treats of the right manner of *enjoying* the good things granted to man here below; and finally, in the Song of Songs, the wisdom of the Israelites rises to the contemplation of the supreme art—that of true and pure *love*.[1]

iii. Other Explanations.

What are the alternative explanations of the origin of the world? Three may be named—

1. *Materialism.*—Materialism tells us that the Universe is eternal and self-existent. The Universe exists, because it exists. God, of course, it leaves out of the question altogether. It holds Him to have no real existence. He is pronounced to be a creature of the human imagination, the product of the human heart at a particular stage of its development. In its most elaborated modern form, Materialism proposes to substitute two self-existent factors for the God of Heaven, two blind, all-powerful agencies—Matter and Force. It pronounces the Universe to be the result of innumerable combinations of self-existent force with self-existent matter; and it maintains that while the quantity of this eternally existing force is invariable, force can transform itself into light, into heat, into electricity, into magnetism; it is, by turns, weight, affinity, cohesion, mechanism. It is inherent in matter; it is light and heat in the suns and in the fixed stars; it is mechanical impulse in planets which move around a central globe; it is cohesion or magnetism in the ponderable material of the heavenly bodies. Its action is regulated by uncreated, self-existent laws.

¶ I do not ask whether we can listen to a system which gives the lie, both to the heart and to the conscience, to some of the deepest and profoundest aspirations of which man is conscious.

[1] F. Godet.

But I bid you look out for one moment upon the Universe and ask yourselves if the materialistic account of its existence is even rational. That quick-witted and thoughtful people of antiquity, the Greeks, gave it a name which has lasted until modern times; they called it the Cosmos. They meant by that word that upon the face of the Universe there is stamped beyond everything else the imprint of an harmonious beauty. It meets the eye, it falls upon the ear of man, this harmony of nature; it is no fancy impression which we gain from that splendid spectacle of universal order. But why should this harmony exist? Why do we behold this regularity, this concerted and orderly movement of universal existence? If blind force and blind matter are the only ultimate factors of existence, why should chaos ever have terminated in a reign of such harmonious and perfect order? Materialism replies that force moulds matter in obedience to laws. But law implies a legislator, and the question is, Who has created the laws? Why do these laws exist and no other? Has any one presided over that perpetual intercommunion of force with matter, and guided it by law to a result of such singular beauty? Atheism smiles at us Christians when we ask this question, and replies, "A chance." Out of millions upon millions of chances that it might have been otherwise, one chance has carried the day; it has issued in the reign of order; it has eventuated in the world.[1]

¶ There was a philosopher, a great man in Aberdeen; his name was Dr. Beattie. He had a little boy about five years old, who was just able to read. Dr. Beattie wanted to teach his little boy about God, and how do you think he did it? He went into the garden, and in a corner, with his finger, he made in the ground the letters of his little boy's name; and when he had made those marks in the ground he put some mustard and cress in those lines. About ten days afterwards his little boy came running into his study, saying, "Father, father, there is my name coming up in my garden." He could just read it. The father said, "Nonsense! nonsense! There cannot be your name in the garden. Don't talk like that." He said, "Father, come and see." He took him out, and there was his name in the garden. The father said, "There is nothing remarkable in that; it all came by chance." The little boy pulled his father by the coat into the house, and said, "I do not think it came by chance, father. It could not come by chance." The father said, "Do you think somebody put it there, then?" "Yes, I do, father," said the

[1] H. P. Liddon.

little boy. "I think somebody must have put it there." Then his father began to tell him about God. "That is just the way with you," he said. "Somebody *must* have made you. You are more wonderful than that mustard and cress."[1]

2. *Pantheism.*—From the belief that the Universe is the result of matter and force guided by chance a violent recoil is natural; and when this recoil takes place without the guidance of Revelation the result is Pantheism. While the Atheistic Materialist says, "There is no God," the Pantheist answers, "Everything is God." The Universe is not made by God; it is God in solution; God passing into various manifestations of being. God is the soul of the Universe; He is the common principle which constitutes its unity; He is at the root of, He combines, He manifests Himself in all its infinite variety of being and life. He is the common fund of life, which animates all that lives; He is the existence which is shared in by all that exists. Pantheism lays emphasis on, it exaggerates, two great truths—the Omnipresence of God, and the interdependence of created life. But Pantheism denies that God is independent of the world; it asserts that He has no existence apart from the Universe which manifests Him as being Himself. It asserts that He is not a Person, having as such consciousness, memory, and will; that He is only an impersonal quality or force; or that He is an Idea, slowly realizing itself in being. Of the general doctrine there are many shades and modifications, but they practically agree in making the Universe identical with God.

¶ Pantheism often uses a religious kind of language which puts people off their guard and blinds them to its real nature and drift. But if Pantheism speaks of God it practically denies Him. Pantheism says that God is the Infinite; but then it goes on to say that this Infinite exists only in that which is finite. But if the Infinite be thus literally identified with the finite, it ceases to be, or rather never was, the Infinite, and there is in reality no Infinite in existence; in other words, there is no God. This is a speculative objection, sufficiently formidable but less serious than a moral objection which I proceed to notice. The very first element of our belief in God is that God is a Moral Being, that He is Essential Right, Essential Justice, Essential Sanctity, Essential Purity, Essential Truth, Essential Love,

[1] James Vaughan.

But if you say with the Pantheist that God is Universal Life, and that Universal Life is God, you thereby destroy God's Morality. You make God the agent and producer of evil as well as the agent or producer of good; or else you deny that the distinction between absolute good and absolute evil really exists. You make God, indeed, the energy which produces deeds of charity, of courage, of justice, of integrity; but you also identify Him with the energy which issues in adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, and all that is untrue, cruel, impure.[1]

¶ It is surely more philosophical to believe that all true being centres in Personality, and proceeds from Personality, than that some pantheistic or atheistic *It* is the ground and first principle of Nature. The one implies that Nature is thought*less*, soul*less*, and the other that she is full of soul.[2]

3. *The Eternity of Matter.*—Besides the doctrines of Materialistic Atheism and Pantheism there is one other supposition—that the Universe and God are both eternal; that an Eternal Universe has existed side by side with an Eternal God. This is the refuge of minds which shrink from the revealed truth of a creation, yet hesitate to acquiesce in the dark theories of a Universe without God, or a Universe which is God. But this third theory inevitably resolves itself into one of the two first. Unless it is to say that there are two Gods, two self-existent, co-eternal Beings, either it must say that the Universe is the reality, and God the imaginary counterpart, or it must say that the Universe itself is God. And if, somewhat violently, this consequence be declined, and the co-existence of God and an Eternal Universe be resolutely maintained, whence then, we ask, come the laws, the harmony, the form of this self-subsisting, uncreated Universe? We have only the difficulties of Atheism or of Pantheism, as the case may be, without their completeness.

¶ How the Jews have understood the first verse of Genesis is sufficiently notorious. "Those," says Maimonides, "who believe in the laws of our master Moses, hold that the whole world, which comprehends everything except the Creator, after being in a state of non-existence, received its existence from God, being called into existence out of nothing. . . . It is a fundamental principle of our law that God created the world from nothing." The mother of the Maccabean martyrs, when endeavouring to strengthen her youngest son for his last agony, bids him look upon the

[1] H. P. Liddon. [2] John Pulsford, *The Supremacy of Man*, 127.

heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and consider that God made them out of things that were not. If the Alexandrian author of the Book of Wisdom speaks of God's making the cosmos out of shapeless matter, it does not follow that, like Philo afterwards, he had so yielded to Platonic ideas as to suppose that matter was eternal; he is speaking of God's later creative action, which gave form to matter that had been made before. Justin Martyr uses the phrase in the same sense; and St. Clement of Alexandria speaks of matter having no relation to time, not meaning that matter is eternal, but that it had been created at a period when there were no "times or seasons or days or years." Tertullian holds that the Carthaginian artist, Hermogenes, who probably had never unlearnt his heathen creed, really teaches the existence of a second God when he asserts the eternity of matter: "Duos Deos infert," says Tertullian, "materiam parem Deo infert." And the common sense of Christian antiquity is expressed in the devout reasoning of St. Augustine: "Thou, O Lord, hast made heaven and earth; yet not out of Thine own Substance, for then heaven and earth would be equal to Thine Only Begotten, and, besides Thyself, there was nought else out of which Thou couldst make it: therefore hast Thou made heaven and earth out of nothing."

iv. Continuous Creation.

In the sense of giving form and order to pre-existent matter, God has continued to create ever since the Creation. It is quite possible, as was distantly suggested by Peter Lombard in the heart of the Middle Ages, and as is maintained by the evolutionary theory in our time, that He has continuously developed ever new species of creatures by a natural selection out of lower species previously existing. In this, and other kindred ways, it may be that He "worketh hitherto." And to us the development of one species out of another may appear even more wonderful and a greater miracle than the independent creation of every species.

¶ The forest oak is a majestic object, as it sits rooted upon its rocks, looking forth toward all the winds, and watching the seasons come and go. The apparatus of an intricate life is playing in a million of veins and arteries, adding each year its ring of robust strength to the concentric circles on which you may mark off the centuries, girding about it anew its coats of shaggy bark, and painting its leaves with the tender green of spring and the ruddy hue of autumn. It is the grand production of His word who bade

the earth bring forth her grass, her herb, her tree. But you bring to me, half hidden in its rustic cup, an acorn, and tell me that in the white kernel within that brown shell are imprisoned all the possibilities of the future oak—not some chance tree, it may chance of beech or elm or of some other tree, but the oak itself with all its lordly traits, its giant boll, its stretch and grasp of root, its tough fibre, its shaggy bark, its deep-cut leaves of shining green—that all these, to the last detail, are provided for in that little nodule of starch, and I say this is a greater wonder still![1]

¶ Men startle us with their beginnings; at once they show their hand, and after the pomp of initiation we are disappointed with the finish. This is all exactly contrary to the method of the greatest Worker of all. He is usually modest, meagre, unpromising in His beginnings; but His finishing strokes make the sublime. It was thus with the creation of the world. Starting with slime and darkness, He went forward in firmaments, suns, moons, stars, and the humanity that is more than all galaxies. This is God's order in the world still. Beginning with coral insects and earth-worms, He ends with rich landscapes; beginning with specks of jelly, He works up to splendid organisms; beginning with sober seeds, He crowns His creation with the golden lilies and burning roses.[2]

II.

The Creator.

The sentence, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," stands like an archway at the beginning of the Universe. In the beginning of heaven, God; in the beginning of the earth, God; in the beginning of time, God; in the beginning of man, God; in the beginning of the Bible, God; in the beginning of salvation, God. Looking back at the universe to the time when the chaotic mists hung across the morning of creation, we see streaking their silvery summits that infinite word, "God." Looking above us at the stars of the heavens, and contemplating their number and magnitude, and the power that created and sustains them, we think of "God." Looking forward into the infinite future, toward which all are travelling, we meet with "God." The idea of God is the centre of the spiritual universe. It is the focal point of human thought. It

[1] L. W. Bacon. [2] W. L. Watkinson.

is the answer to the soul's thirst. It is the universal prayer. It is the greatest idea in the world. It is the idea that overwhelms us, that humbles us, that exalts us, that saves us, that inspires us, and that makes us believe in our immortality. It is the keynote to religious progress. "As a man thinks about God, so is he."

i. What does Creation tell us about God?

What discoveries about God does Creation allow us to make? If He is creator, what does that enable us to assert concerning Him?

1. *His Existence.*—Conceive that a thoughtful man, in the full maturity of his powers, had suddenly been placed in the midst of this beautiful system of natural life. His eye rests upon the forms and colours around him with keen, fresh delight. Earth, sky, sun, stars, clouds, mountains, valleys, rivers, seas, trees, animals, flowers, and fruits, in groups and separately, pass before him. His thought is still eagerly curious; it has not yet been vulgarized and impoverished down to the point at which existence is taken as a matter of course: the beauty, the mysteriousness, the awfulness of the Universe, still elevates and thrills him; and his first desire is to account to himself for the spectacle on which he gazes. Whence comes it, this beautiful scene? What upholds it? Why is it here? Does it exist of itself? Is it its own upholder and ruler, or is there any Cause or Being in existence who gives it substance and shape? From this question there is no escape; we cannot behold the vast flood of life sweep before our eyes without asking whence it takes its rise: we cannot read the pages of that marvellous book of Nature and be indifferent to the question whether they have an Author. And thus it is that in circles where Christ is not named, or is named only in accents of contemptuous scorn, the question is asked in our day more and more importunately: Whence comes this Universe? what upholds it in being? for what end does it exist? Now the Christian solution of this question is the only one which seriously respects the rights and even the existence of God.

¶ Dr. Blomfield, Bishop of London, used to warn his ordination candidates against too great confidence in attempting to prove the existence of God. Preaching in Suffolk on one occasion in

early life from the text, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," he entered into a powerful argument in proof of the existence of God. The service over, the preacher went to dine with a neighbouring farmer, who complimented him on his sermon, but observed quite naively, "At the same time, sir, I believe there *is* a God."

¶ That in the beginning of his noviciate, he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in thinking of God, so as to convince his mind of, and to impress deeply upon his heart, the Divine existence, rather by devout sentiments, than by studied reasonings, and elaborate meditations. That by this short and sure method, he exercised himself in the knowledge and love of God, resolving to use his utmost endeavour to live in a continual sense of His Presence, and, if possible, never to forget Him more.[1]

¶ The word "God" is very great. He who realizes and acknowledges this will be mild and fair in his judgment of those who frankly confess they have not the courage to say they believe in God.[2]

¶ There was a very wise man who lived many, many hundreds of years ago. His name was Simonides. People came to him because he was one of the wisest men that ever lived; and they said to him, "What is God, Simonides?" He said, "Give me a day to think about it." They came to him the next day, and said, "What is God, Simonides?" He said, "Give me a week to think about it." After a week had passed, they came to him again, and said, "What is God, Simonides?" He said, "Give me a month to think about it." They came again to him at the end of a month, and they said, "What is God, Simonides?" He said, "Give me a year to think about it." At the end of a year they came to him, and said, "What is God, Simonides?" And he said, "I am no nearer than when I first began to think about it. I cannot tell what God is."[3]

¶ Some one came once to an Arab in his tent in the desert, and said to him, "How do you know there is a God?" He said, "How do I know whether it was a man or a camel that went by my tent last night?" How did he know which it was? "By the footprints." The marks in the sand showed whether it was a man's foot, or a camel's foot, that had passed his tent. So the Arab said, "That is the way I know God. I know Him by His footprints. These are His footprints that are all around me."

[1] Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 25.
[2] R. Rothe, *Still Hours*, 91. [3] James Vaughan.

2. *His Power.*—"God created:" does anything so lead up our thoughts to the almightiness of God as this? For think of the untold vastness of creation, with its two infinities, of great and small; universe beyond universe, in ever-expanding circles of magnificence, as we press our researches without, and universe within universe, in ever-refining delicacy of minute texture, as we pry into the secrets of the infinitely little—think of all this, and then think that it came into being at His word: "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

¶ Observe, as an element of creation, the presence of that mysterious gift, so intimately present to each one of us, in its essence so entirely beyond our power of analysis, which we call Life. We know life by its symptoms: by growth and movement, by feeling and gesture; and in its higher forms, by speech and expression. What is life? It is growth in the vegetable; it is feeling and movement in the animal; it is thought, reflection, resolve in man, as these manifest themselves in speech and look and action. But what is it in itself, in its essence, this gift of life? Science, the unraveller of so many secrets, is silent here: as silent as when she had not yet begun to inquire and to teach. She can define the conditions, the accompaniments, the surroundings, the phenomena of life; but its essence she knows not. It is a mystery which eludes her in her laboratories and her museums; each of her most accomplished votaries carries it perpetually with him, and understands it as little as does the peasant or the child. Oh, marvellous gift of life! true ray of the Creator's Beauty, in thy lowest as in thy highest forms! We men can foster it; we can stint it; we can, by a profound natural mystery, as parents, yet in obedience to inviolable laws, transmit it as a sacred deposit to beings which have it not; we can crush it out by violence into death. But we cannot create it.

¶ When Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, was dying, he looked round with one of his beaming smiles, and said, "What do you think specially gives me comfort now? The Creation! Did Jehovah create the world, or did I? I think He did. Now if He made the world, He can sufficiently take care of me."

O Master of the Beautiful,
Creating us from hour to hour,
Give me this vision to the full
To see in lightest things Thy power.

This vision give, no heaven afar,
No throne, and yet I will rejoice,
Knowing beneath my feet a star,
Thy word in every wandering voice.[1]

ii. What other works follow from Creation?

Belief in the creation of the universe by God out of nothing naturally leads to belief in God's continuous Providence, and Providence in turn, considering the depth of man's moral misery, suggests Redemption. No such anticipation would be reasonable, if we could suppose that the world emanated from a passive God, or that, *per impossibile*, it had existed side by side with Him from everlasting. But if He had created it in His freedom, the question will inevitably be asked, Why did He create it? Could it add anything to His Infinite Blessedness and Glory? could it make Him more powerful, more happy, more wise? Revelation answers the question by ascribing creation to that attribute of God which leads Him to communicate His life; that generous attribute which is goodness in its relation to the irrational and inanimate universe, and love in its relation to personal beings. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

¶ The sower is justly held responsible for the due care and cultivation of the growing plant. To neglect it, to allow it to wither and die for lack of proper attention, is felt to be a wrong and almost a cruelty. The father and the mother are, still more justly and still more severely, held responsible for the maintenance, education, and tenderest nurture of their children. And why? Because they are their *pro-creators*; that is, under God, their creators. Nature itself teaches us the rights of creation. And can we think for a moment, that *the* Creator is forgetful of, is insensible to, those rights? Let our Saviour's familiar argument be the reply to the question: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" *The* Creator, *the* Father, *must* be infinitely more righteous and faithful than all subordinate and secondary creators and fathers. He will not forsake—He will have a desire to—the work of His own hands.[2]

[1] "A. E." [2] D. J. Vaughan.

1. *Providence.*—If God created the world He will also rule it. God does not create worlds in order that meaner spirits may control them. Creation means providence, and providence means redemption, and redemption means heaven, and heaven is a term which no lexicographer can fitly define.

¶ Of this property of God's activity there is on earth one most beautiful and instructive shadow—the love of a parent for his child. That love is the most disinterested, the purest, if not the strongest, of human passions. The parent hopes for nothing from his child; yet he will work for it, suffer for it, die for it. If you ask the reason, it is because he has been the means of bringing it into existence. Certainly, if it lives, it may support and comfort him in his old age; but that is not the motive of his anxious care. He feels the glory and the responsibility of fatherhood; and this leads him to do what he can for the helpless infant which depends on him. Our Lord appeals to this parental instinct when He teaches us the efficacy of prayer. If men, evil as they are, give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall not a moral God—your heavenly Father—give the best of gifts, His Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him.[1]

Lo! I have sought, he said, and striven
To find the truth, and found it not,
But yet to me it hath been given,

And unto you it hath been brought.
This Host of ours our Father is,
And we the children He begot.

Upon my brow I felt His kiss,
His love is all about our steps,
And He would lead us all to bliss;

For though He comes in many shapes,
His love is throbbing in them all,
And from His love no soul escapes,
And from His mercy none can fall.[2]

2. *Redemption.*—If love was the motive for creation, it implies God's continuous interest in created life. If love urged God to reveal Himself by His work under finite conditions—and both David and St. Paul insist upon the high significance of

[1] H. P. Liddon. [2] Walter C. Smith.

creation as an unveiling of the hidden life of God—surely love might urge Him to reveal Himself yet more distinctly under finite conditions, as "manifest in the flesh." The formula that "time has no meaning for God" is sometimes used even by writers of consideration, in senses which are incompatible with the idea of creation. If it is not beneath God's dignity to create a finite world at all, it is not beneath His dignity to accept the consequences of His work; to take part in the development of His creatures; to subject Himself, in some sense, to the conditions imposed by His original act. If in His knowledge He necessarily anticipates the development of His work, so that to Him a "thousand years are as one day"; by His love, on the other hand, which led Him to move out of Himself in creation at the first, He travails with the slow onward movement of the world and of humanity; and His incarnation in time, when demanded by the supreme needs of the creatures of His hand, is in a line with that first of mysteries, His deigning to create at all. For thus God, having created the rational and human world, so loved it, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

¶ It lies at the very root of all Christian religion that our Word of Revelation should open, not with the Call of Abraham, or the Covenant of Circumcision, or the Law of Sinai, but with the Creation of the Heaven and the Earth. There is One Lord for the physical world and for the spiritual. True; the salvation through Christ has come to us in history from the people of Israel. The work of Redemption, however, is not a Jewish event, but the continuance of the work of Creation, to be consummated in the days of "the Restoration of all things." The love that was manifested on the Cross is the love that was shown in the framing of the Universe. To us, with the Bible in our hands, the two epochs, if the phrase be permissible, are inseparable, that of Creation and that of Redemption. The whole teaching of Revelation springs, as it were, from the first chapter of Genesis. The God who made the world did not send it "spinning down the grooves of change," and then gaze at a distance upon its course, unheeding of its destiny, regardless of its inhabitants. The same God that created has also redeemed, even now sanctifies, even now encompasses us with mercies, and will hereafter, in a fashion and a manner yet to be revealed, restore. The Gospel of Genesis is one of hope.[1]

[1] H. E. Ryle, *On Holy Scripture and Criticism*, 62.

¶ "When" (in the words of a Talmudic allegory) "the Almighty was about to create man, He called together before His Throne a council of the angelic hosts. 'Create him not!' so spake the Angel of *Justice*. 'He will be unjust towards his brother man. He will injure and oppress the weak, and cruelly ill-treat the feeble.' 'Create him not!' said the Angel of *Peace*. 'He will stain the earth with the blood of men, his brethren. The first-born of his race will be the murderer of his brother.' 'Create him not!' said the Angel of *Truth*. 'Thou mayest create him in Thine own image, after Thy likeness, and stamp the impress of truth upon his brow; yet will he desecrate with falsehood even Thine own Sanctuary.' And more they would have said, but *Mercy*—the youngest and dearest child of the Eternal Father—stepped to the sapphire Throne, and knelt before Him, and prayed: 'Father, oh, Father, *Create him*! Create him after Thine own image, and as the favoured child of Thy goodness. When all others, Thy servants, forsake him, I will be with him. I will lovingly aid him, and turn his very errors to his own good. I will touch his heart with pity, and make him merciful to others weaker than himself. When he goes astray from the paths of *Truth* and *Peace*, when he transgresses the laws of *Justice* and *Equity*, I will still be with him; and the consequences of his own errors shall lead him back to the right path, and so Thy forgiving love shall make him, penitent, Thine.' The Father of mankind listened to her voice, and with the aid of Mercy created man."[1]

¶ Let us bear in mind that a religion of mere Theism is now impossible. We are redeemed from our sin by Him who gave us being, and therefore the claims of God the Creator are enhanced and intensified by the new, wondrous, matchless claims of God our Saviour.

'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
'Twas greater to redeem!

And of all the universe the most significant and sacred place is the place of the Cross; for there we hear a voice more full of constraining power than any voice that comes down to us from the everlasting hills, or finds an echo in the spacious heavens, even the voice of a love unto death![2]

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?

[1] H. Gollancz. [2] T. F. Lockyer.

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs,—in the heaven, a perfect round![1]

iii. Three Encouragements.

Now in this great thought of Creation involving Providence and Redemption there are three things to encourage us.

1. First, there is the fact that the material world originated from the spiritual; the visible from the invisible. It is the unseen forces that give shape and form to the things which are. The phenomenal world is but the expression of invisible forces. The Unseen dominates and rules the seen. It would seem as if all force is, in the last analysis, spiritual, and has its seat and origin in God. The Unseen is the eternal and unchangeable; the visible is temporal and perishable. A mighty truth is contained in that word of St. Paul, "All things work together for good . . . while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are . . . not seen are eternal." And all those unseen verities and forces have their root in God.

When that my soul, too far from God,
  In earthy furrows crawled about,
An insect on a dusty clod
  Wandering wingless in and out:

At deepest dusk I looked above
  And saw a million worlds alight,
That burnt the mortal veils of Love
  And left it shining infinite:

I gazed and gazed with lifted head
  Until I found my heart had wings,
And now my soul has ceased to dread
  The weary dust of earthly things.[2]

2. Next there is the fact that the unity of God the Creator carries with it the idea of the unity of the Creation. And here

[1] Browning, *Abt Vogler*. [2] Rachel Annand Taylor.

arises the grand conception of the universe as a cosmos. One law, the law of gravitation, pervades the whole material creation, and binds it into one vast and glorious system. And that law of gravitation, what is it but the expression of one omnipotent Will, the exertion of one infinite Energy? Here the poetry of the Psalmist is seen almost as a physical truth: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" May we not most surely conclude that as physical law pervades all space, so also does moral law reign over the whole creation in unchanged majesty? John Stuart Mill thought there might be a place in the universe where two and two do not make four. That position is unthinkable. Truth here is truth everywhere, because God is the same everywhere. Nothing can really hurt the good man. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him."

¶ Professor Henry Jones, in his book on Browning, points out how Browning differs from two others of his great contemporaries —Emerson and Carlyle. Speaking of Emerson's always rose-coloured view of things, he says: "Such an optimism, such a plunge into the pure blue and away from facts, was Emerson's. Caroline Fox tells a story of him and Carlyle which reveals this very pointedly. It seems that Carlyle once led the serene philosopher through the abominations of the streets of London at midnight, asking him with grim humour, at every few steps, 'Do you believe in the devil *now*?' Emerson replied that the more he saw of the English people the greater and better he thought them. This little incident lays bare the limits of both these great men. Where the one saw, the other was blind. To the one there was the misery and the universal murk; to the other the pure white beam was scarcely broken. Carlyle believed in the good, beyond all doubt; he fought his great battle in its strength, and won; but 'he was sorely wounded.' Emerson was Sir Galahad, blind to all but the Holy Grail; his armour spotless white, his virtue cloistered and unbreathed, his race won without the dust and heat. But his optimism was too easy to be satisfactory." Now, in opposition to the pessimism of Carlyle on the one hand, and the "too easy" optimism of Emerson on the other, Browning —seeing the worst, as Carlyle saw it, and seeing also the best beyond, as Emerson saw it—reveals a true, unfailing, and glorious optimism, which grounds itself upon the only sure, immovable basis—a conviction resulting from the vision of the loving, powerful, regnant God! Evil may exist, does exist—paint it, if

you will, in its blackest colours; but good exists too, and good will triumph at last, because God and good are one. And so our poet declares—

> Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
> Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
> Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
> The waters and the green delights of earth,
> The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
> Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
> And yield my reason up, inadequate
> To reconcile what yet I do behold—
> Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside.[1]

3. And there is also the assurance that through the ages an unceasing Divine purpose runs. Scientific research reveals that plan up to a certain point. It proceeds from lower to higher, and from higher to highest; from inorganic to organic; from the simple to the complex; from the zoophyte to man. It is ever ascending, unfolding into richer amplitude and meaning. Such is the testimony of the rocks. Here revelation takes up the mighty theme. God is in creation. The development of the plan cannot cease where geology leaves it. A Divine purpose runs through the ages, and, according to later revelation, centres in Jesus Christ. Hence He is described as "a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The redemptive idea is thus fundamental; it is the central truth of creation. "For by him and through him and to him are all things." Here is the meaning of creation; man as created is not the ultimate purpose of God, but man as redeemed and glorified. Here the purpose of God in creation becomes luminous and grand. The suffering world is not the fulfilment of the Divine plan, but the renewed and reconstructed world. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together . . . waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." At the opening of the Bible we see all things proceeding from God, at the other end we see all things returning to Him again. "When all things shall be subdued unto him (Christ), then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

¶ There is plan in the universe; plan implies thought, thought

[1] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 30.

predicates a thinker. Philosophically, the Divine mystery of Creation is the transmutation of thought into matter, or the self-evolution of God, the evolution from the Originating Spirit of what was involved in Himself—

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He? Tho' He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

We live in dreams, because the self-evolution of the Spirit in man and matter necessarily implies a career amidst various complications and appearances that are more or less obscure, a kind of divinely appointed dreamland; but the Divine origin of the problem is the assurance of the awakening from the dream, for it is the Omnipotent who is hidden in the dream—the dream of life; and the full awakening will be when Parent and offspring, Thinker and thing thought, become consciously one; perhaps that will be when we die, perhaps there is truth in Shelley's words, "Peace, peace, he is not dead, he doth not sleep, he hath awakened from the dream of life." I do not know. But I do know from direct revelation, endorsed by conscious intuition, that God is Love and that the human race and its Divine source are inseverable, and, as Owen Meredith says—

Only matter's dense opaqueness
  Checks God's Light from shining through it,
And our senses, such their weakness,
  Cannot help our Souls to view it

Till Love lends the world translucence,
  Then we see God clear in all things.
Love's the new sense, Love's the true sense,
  Which teaches us how we should view things.[1]

[1] B. Wilberforce.

Let There be Light.

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Let There Be Light.

And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved (R.V. *m.* was brooding) upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.—Gen. i. 2, 3.

This is the second stage in the history of the Creation. After the first verse, it is of the earth, and of the earth only, that the narrative speaks. The earth did now exist, but in the form of *chaos*. This expression does not mean a state of disorder and confusion, but that state of primitive matter in which no creature had as yet a distinctive existence, and no one element stood out in distinction from others, but all the forces and properties of matter existed, as it were, undivided. The materials were indeed all there, but not *as such*—they were only latent. However, the creative spirit, the principle of order and life, brooded over this matter, which, like a rich organic cell, comprehended in itself the conditions, and up to a certain point the elementary principles, of all future forms of existence. This Spirit was the efficient cause, not of matter itself, but of its organization, which was then to begin. He was the executant of each of those Divine commands, which from this time were to succeed each other, stroke after stroke, till this chaos should be transformed into a world of wonders.

¶ We cannot tell how the Spirit of God brooded over that vast watery mass. It is a mystery, but it is also a fact, and it is here revealed as having happened at the very commencement of the Creation, even before God had said, "Let there be light." The first Divine act in fitting up this planet for the habitation of man was for the Spirit of God to move upon the face of the waters. Till that time, all was formless, empty, out of order, and in confusion. In a word, it was chaos; and to make it into that thing of beauty which the world is at the present moment, even though it is a fallen world, it was needful that the movement of

the Spirit of God should take place upon it. How the Spirit works upon matter, we do not know; but we do know that God, who is a Spirit, created matter, and fashioned matter, and sustained matter, and that He will yet deliver matter from the stain of sin which is upon it. We shall see new heavens and a new earth in which materialism itself shall be lifted up from its present state of ruin, and shall glorify God; but without the Spirit of God the materialism of this world must have remained for ever in chaos. Only as the Spirit came did the work of creation begin.[1]

We have first chaos, then order (or cosmos); we have also first darkness, then light. It is the Spirit of God that out of chaos brings cosmos; it is the Word of God that out of darkness brings light. Accordingly, the text is easily divided in this way—

I. Cosmos out of Chaos.
  i. Chaos.
  ii. The Spirit of God.
  iii. Cosmos.

II. Light out of Darkness.
  i. Darkness.
  ii. God's Word.
  iii. Light.

I.

Cosmos out of Chaos.

i. Chaos.

"The earth was without form (R.V. *waste*) and void." The Hebrew (tōhū wā-bōhū) is an alliterative description of a *chaos*, in which nothing can be distinguished or defined. *Tōhū* is a word which it is difficult to express consistently in English; but it denotes mostly something *unsubstantial*, or (figuratively) *unreal*; cf. Isa. xlv. 18 (of the earth), "He created it not a *tōhū*, he fashioned it to be inhabited," verse 19, "I said not, Seek ye me as a *tōhū* (*i.e.* in vain)." *Bōhū*, as Arabic shows, is rightly rendered *empty* or *void*. Compare the same combination of words to suggest the idea of a return to primeval chaos in Jer. iv. 23 and Isa. xxxiv. 11 ("the line of *tōhū* and the plummet of *bōhū*").

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

Who seeketh finds: what shall be his relief
Who hath no power to seek, no heart to pray,
No sense of God, but bears as best he may,
A lonely incommunicable grief?

What shall he do? One only thing he knows,
That his life flits a frail uneasy spark
In the great vast of universal dark,
And that the grave may not be all repose.

Be still, sad soul! lift thou no passionate cry,
But spread the desert of thy being bare
To the full searching of the All-seeing Eye:

Wait—and through dark misgiving, blank despair,
God will come down in pity, and fill the dry
Dead place with light, and life, and vernal air.[1]

ii. The Spirit of God.

1. In the Old Testament the spirit of man is the principle of life, viewed especially as the seat of the stronger and more active energies of life; and the "spirit" of God is analogously the Divine force or agency, to the operation of which are attributed various extraordinary powers and activities of men, as well as supernatural gifts. In the later books of the Old Testament, it appears also as the power which creates and sustains life. It is in the last-named capacity that it is mentioned here. The chaos of verse 2 was not left in hopeless gloom and death; already, even before God "spake," the Spirit of God, with its life-giving energy, was "brooding" over the waters, like a bird upon its nest, and (so it seems to be implied) fitting them in some way to generate and maintain life, when the Divine *fiat* should be pronounced.

This, then, is the first lesson of the Bible; that at the root and origin of all this vast material universe, before whose laws we are crushed as the moth, there abides a living conscious Spirit, who wills and knows and fashions all things. The belief of this changes for us the whole face of nature, and instead of a chill, impersonal world of forces to which no appeal can be made, and in which matter is supreme, gives us the home of a Father.

[1] J. C. Shairp.

¶ In speaking of Divine perfection, we mean to say that God is just and true and loving—the Author of order and not of disorder, of good and not of evil. Or rather, that He is justice, that He is truth, that He is love, that He is order; . . . and that wherever these qualities are present, whether in the human soul or in the order of nature, there is God. We might still see Him everywhere if we had not been mistakenly seeking Him apart from us, instead of in us; away from the laws of nature, instead of in them. And we become united to Him not by mystical absorption, but by partaking, whether consciously or unconsciously of that truth and justice and love which He Himself is.[1]

I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains.[2]

2. The doctrine of the all-pervading action of the Spirit of God, and the living Power underlying all the energies of Nature, occupies a wider space in the pages of Divine revelation than it holds in popular Christian theology, or in the hymns, the teaching, and the daily thoughts of modern Christendom. In these the doctrine of the Spirit of God is, if we judge by Scripture, too much restricted to His work in Redemption and Salvation, to His wonder-working and inspiring energy in the early Church, and to His secret regenerating and sanctifying energy in the renewal of souls for life everlasting. And in this work of redemption He is spoken of by the special appellation of the Holy Ghost, even by the revisers of the Authorized Version; although

[1] Benjamin Jowett. [2] Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*.

there seems to be not the slightest reason for the retention of that equivocal old English word, full of unfortunate associations, more than there would be in so translating the same word as it occurs in our Lord's discourse at the well of Jacob—"God is *a Spirit*: and they that worship him must worship him *in spirit* and in truth"—where the insertion of this ancient Saxon word for spirit would create a painful shock by its irreverence. All these redeeming and sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God in the soul of man have been treated with great fulness in our own language, in scores of valuable writings, from the days of John Owen, the Puritan Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, down to the present time, when Bishop Moule has given us his excellent work entitled *Veni Creator*, a most delightful exposition of Scripture doctrine on the Holy Spirit in His dealings with the souls of men. In few of these works, however, appears any representation of the Scripture doctrine of the Spirit of God, as working in Nature, as the direct agent of the Eternal Will in the creation and everlasting government of the *physical and intellectual universe.*

¶ It has been the fault of religious teachers, and it is also the fault of much of what prevails in the tone of the religious world —to draw an unwarrantably harsh contrast between the natural and the spiritual. A violent schism has thereby been created between the sacred and the secular, and, consequently, many disasters have ensued. Good people have done infinite mischief by placing the sacred in opposition to the secular. They have thus denied God's presence and God's glory in things where His presence should have been gladly acknowledged, and have thereby cast a certain dishonour on matters which should have been recognized as religious in the truest sense. The result has been that others, carefully studying the things thus handed over to godlessness, and discovering therein rich mines of truth, and beauty, and goodness, have too frequently accepted the false position assigned to them, and have preached, in the name of Agnosticism or Atheism, a gospel of natural law, in opposition to the exclusive and narrow gospel of the religionists I have described.[1]

3. It is an ennobling thought that all this fair world we see, all those healthful and strong laws in ceaseless operation around us, all that long history of change and progress which we have

[1] Donald Macleod, *Christ and Society*, 243.

been taught to trace, can be linked on to what we behold at Pentecost. It is the same Spirit who filled St. Peter and St. John with the life and power and love of Christ, who also "dwells in the light of setting suns, in the round ocean, and the living air." There is no opposition. All are diverse operations of the same Spirit, who baptized St. Paul with his glowing power, and St. John with his heavenly love, and who once moved over the face of the waters, and evoked order out of chaos. The Bible calls nothing secular, all things are sacred, and only sin and wickedness are excluded from the domain which is claimed for God. But if we believe that He has never left Himself without a witness, and that the very rain and sunshine and fruitful seasons are the gifts of Him whose Spirit once moved over the waters and brought order out of confusion, then are we entitled to go further and to say that in the love of parent and child, in the heroic self-sacrifice of patriots, in the thoughts of wisdom and truth uttered by wise men, by Sakyamuni or Confucius, Socrates or Seneca, we must see nothing less than the strivings of that same Divine Spirit who spake by the prophets, and was shed forth in fulness upon the Church at Pentecost.

¶ In the Life of Sir E. Burne-Jones, there is an account by his wife of the effect first made upon her by coming into contact with him and his artist friends, Morris and Rossetti. She says, "I wish it were possible to explain the impression made upon me as a young girl, whose experience so far had been quite remote from art, by sudden and close intercourse with those to whom it was the breath of life. The only approach I can make to describing it is by saying that I felt in the presence of a new religion. Their love of beauty did not seem to me unbalanced, but as if it included the whole world and raised the point from which they regarded everything. Human beauty especially was in a way sacred to them, I thought; and a young lady who was much with them, and sat for them as a model, said to me, 'It was being in a new world to be with them. I sat to them and I was there with them. And I was a holy thing to them—I was a holy thing to them.'"

Wherever through the ages rise
The altars of self-sacrifice,
Where love its arms has opened wide,
Or man for man has calmly died,

I see the same white wings outspread,
That hovered o'er the Master's head!
Up from undated time they come,
The martyr souls of heathendom;
And to His cross and passion bring
Their fellowship of suffering.

So welcome I from every source
The tokens of that primal Force,
Older than heaven itself, yet new
As the young heart it reaches to,
Beneath whose steady impulse rolls
The tidal wave of human souls;
Guide, comforter, and inward word,
The eternal spirit of the Lord![1]

iii. Cosmos.

1. The Spirit of God *was brooding upon the face of the waters.* The word rendered "brooded" (or "*was brooding,*" R.V.*m.*) occurs elsewhere only in Deut. xxxii. 11, where it is used of an eagle (properly, a griffon-vulture) *hovering* over its young. It is used similarly in Syriac. It is possible that its use here may be a survival, or echo, of the old belief, found among the Phœnicians, as well as elsewhere, of a world-egg, out of which, as it split, the earth, sky, and heavenly bodies emerged; the crude, material representation appearing here transformed into a beautiful and suggestive figure.

2. The hope of the chaotic world, and the hope of the sinning soul, is all in the brooding Spirit of God seeking to bring order out of chaos, to bring life out of death, light out of darkness, and beauty out of barrenness and ruin. It was God's Spirit brooding over the formless world that put the sun in the heavens, that filled the world with warmth and light, that made the earth green with herbage, that caused forests to grow upon the hillsides, with birds to sing in them, and planted flowers to exhale their perfume in the valleys. So God's Spirit broods over the heart of man that has fallen into darkness and chaos through sin.

(1) As the movement of the Holy Spirit upon the waters was the first act in the six days' work, so the work of the Holy Spirit

[1] Whittier.

in the soul is the first work of grace in that soul. It is a very humbling truth, but it is a truth notwithstanding its humiliating form, that the best man that mere morality ever produced is still "waste and void" if the Spirit of God has not come upon him. All the efforts of men which they make by nature, when stirred up by the example of others or by godly precepts, produce nothing but chaos in another shape; some of the mountains may have been levelled, but valleys have been elevated into other mountains; some vices have been discarded, but only to be replaced by other vices that are, perhaps, even worse; or certain transgressions have been forsaken for a while, only to be followed by a return to the selfsame sins, so that it has happened unto them, "According to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. ii. 22). Unless the Spirit of God has been at work within him, the man is still, in the sight of God, "without form and void" as to everything which God can look upon with pleasure.

(2) To this work nothing whatever is contributed by the man himself. "The earth was waste and void," so it could not do anything to help the Spirit. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." The Spirit found no light there; it had to be created. The heart of man promises help, but "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The will has great influence over the man, but the will is itself depraved, so it tries to play the tyrant over all the other powers of the man, and it refuses to become the servant of the eternal Spirit of truth.

(3) Not only was there nothing whatever that could help the Holy Spirit, but there seemed nothing at all congruous to the Spirit. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of order, but there was disorder. He is the Spirit of light, but there was darkness. Does it not seem a strange thing that the Spirit of God should have come there at all? Adored in His excellent glory in the heaven where all is order and all is light, why should He come to brood over that watery deep, and to begin the great work of bringing order out of chaos? Why should the Spirit of God ever have come into our hearts? What was there in us to induce the Spirit of God to begin a work of grace in us?

We admire the condescension of Jesus in leaving Heaven to dwell upon earth; but do we equally admire the condescension of the Holy Spirit in coming to dwell in such poor hearts as ours? Jesus dwelt with sinners, but the Holy Ghost dwells in us.

(4) Where the Spirit came, the work was carried on to completion. The work of creation did not end with the first day, but went on till it was finished on the sixth day. God did not say, "I have made the light, and now I will leave the earth as it is"; and when He had begun to divide the waters, and to separate the land from the sea, He did not say, "Now I will have no more to do with the world." He did not take the newly fashioned earth in His hands, and fling it back into chaos; but He went on with His work until, on the seventh day, when it was completed, He rested from all His work. He will not leave unfinished the work which He has commenced in our souls. Where the Spirit of God has begun to move, He continues to move until the work is done; and He will not fail or turn aside until all is accomplished.[1]

Burning our hearts out with longing
The daylight passed:
Millions and millions together,
The stars at last!

Purple the woods where the dewdrops,
Pearly and grey,
Wash in the cool from our faces
The flame of day.

Glory and shadow grow one in
The hazel wood:
Laughter and peace in the stillness
Together brood.

Hopes all unearthly are thronging
In hearts of earth:
Tongues of the starlight are calling
Our souls to birth.

Down from the heaven its secrets
Drop one by one;
Where time is for ever beginning
And time is done.

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

There light eternal is over
  Chaos and night:
Singing with dawn lips for ever,
  "Let there be light!"

There too for ever in twilight
  Time slips away,
Closing in darkness and rapture
  Its awful day.[1]

II.

Light out of Darkness.

i. Darkness.

"Darkness was upon the face of the deep." The deep (Heb. *tehōm*) is not here what the deep would denote to us, *i.e.* the sea, but the primitive undivided waters, the huge watery mass which the writer conceived as enveloping the chaotic earth. Milton (*Paradise Lost*, vii. 276 ff.) gives an excellent paraphrase—

> The Earth was formed, but, in the womb as yet
> Of waters, embryon, immature, involved,
> Appeared not; over all the face of Earth
> Main ocean flowed.

The darkness which was upon the face of the deep is a type of the natural darkness of the fallen intellect that is ignorant of God, and has not the light of faith. "Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Very often in Holy Scripture darkness is the symbol of sin, and the state of those who are separated from God. Satan is the prince of "the power of darkness," while in God there "is no darkness at all."

¶ The intermixture in our life of the material and the spiritual has no more striking illustration than in the influence upon us of darkness. The "power of darkness" is a real power, and that apart from any theological considerations. The revolution of this planet on its axis, which for a certain number of hours out of the twenty-four shuts from us the light of day, has had in every age the profoundest effect on man's inner states. It has told enormously on his religion. It has created a vocabulary—a

[1] A. E., *The Divine Vision*, 20.

very sinister one. It lies at the origin of fear. It binds the reason and sets loose the imagination. We are not the same at midnight as at midday. The child mind, and the savage mind, which is so closely akin to it, are reawakened in us. "I do not believe in ghosts," said Fontenelle, "but I am afraid of them." We can all feel with him there.[1]

ii. God's Word.

1. *And God said.*—This gives the keynote to the narrative, the burden ten times repeated, of this magnificent poem. To say is both to think and to will. In this speaking of God there is both the legislative power of His intelligence, and the executive power of His will; this one word dispels all notion of blind matter, and of brute fatalism; it reveals an enlightened Power, an intelligent and benevolent Thought, underlying all that is.

¶ Says Carlyle: "Man is properly an *incarnated word*; the word that he speaks is the *man* himself." In like manner, and with still more truth, might it be said of God that His Word is Himself; only John's assertion is not that the Word *is* God, but that it *was* God, implying *is* of course.[2]

2. And at the same time that this word, "And God said," appears to us as the veritable truth of things, it also reveals to us their true value and legitimate use. Beautiful and beneficent as the work may be, its real worth is not in itself; it is in the thought and in the heart of the Author to whom it owes its existence. Whenever we stop short in the work itself, our enjoyment of it can only be superficial, and we are, through our ingratitude, on the road to an idolatry more or less gross. Our enjoyment is pure and perfect only when it results from the contact of our soul with the Author Himself. To form this bond is the true aim of Nature, as well as the proper destination of the life of man.

¶ We read, "God created"; "God made"; "God saw"; "God divided"; "God called"; "God set"; "God blessed"; "God formed"; "God planted"; "God took"; "God commanded"; but the most frequent word here is "God *said*." As elsewhere, "He *spake* and it was done"; "He *commanded* the light to shine out of darkness"; "the worlds were framed by the *Word* of God";

[1] J. Brierley, *Life and the Ideal*, 248.
[2] J. W., *Letters of Yesterday*, 48.

"upholding all things by the *word* of His power." *God's* "word" is then the one medium or link between Him and creation. . . . The frequency with which it is repeated shows what stress God lays on it. . . . Between the "nothing" and the "something"—non-existence and creation—there intervenes only the word—it needed only the word, no more; but after that many other agencies come in—second causes, natural laws and processes—all *evolving the great original fiat.* When the Son of God was here it was thus He acted. *He spake*: "Lazarus, come forth"; "Young man, arise"; "Damsel, arise"; "Be opened," and *it was done.* The *Word* was still the medium. It is so now. He speaks to us (1) in Creation, (2) in the Word, (3) in Providence, (4) by His Sabbaths.[1]

3. This word, "And God said," further reveals the personality of God. Behind this veil of the visible universe which dazzles me, behind these blind forces of which the play at times terror-strikes me, behind this regularity of seasons and this fixedness of laws, which almost compel me to recognize in all things only the march of a fixed Fate, this word, "And God said," unveils to me an Arm of might, an Eye which sees, a Heart full of benevolence which is seeking me, a Person who loves me. This ray of light which, as it strikes upon my retina, paints there with perfect accuracy, upon a surface of the size of a centime, a landscape of many miles in extent—He it is who commanded it to shine.

Be kind to our darkness, O Fashioner, dwelling in light,
  And feeding the lamps of the sky;
Look down upon this one, and let it be sweet in Thy sight
  I pray Thee, to-night.
O watch whom Thou madest to dwell on its soil, Thou Most
    High!
For this is a world full of sorrow (there may be but one);
Keep watch o'er its dust, else Thy children for aye are undone,
  For this is a world where we die.[2]

iii. Light.

1. *Let there be light.*—The mention of this Divine command is sufficient to make the reader understand that this element, which was an object of worship to so many Oriental nations, is

[1] Horatius Bonar. [2] Jean Ingelow.

neither an eternal principle nor the product of blind force, but the work of a free and intelligent will. It is this same thought that is expressed in the division of the work of Creation into six days and six nights. The Creation is thus represented under the image of a week of work, during which an active and intelligent workman pursues his task, through a series of phases, graduated with skill and calculated with certainty, in view of an end definitely conceived from the first.

¶ "Let there be light." This is at once the motto and the condition of all progress that is worthy of the name. From chaos into order, from slumber into wakefulness, from torpor into the glow of life—yes, and "from strength to strength"; it has been a condition of progress that there should be light. God saw the light, that it was good.

2. The Bible is not a handbook of science, and it matters little to us whether its narrative concerning the origin of the world meets the approval of the learned or not. The truths which it enfolds are such as science can neither displace nor disprove, and which, despite the strides which we have made, are yet as important to mankind as on the day when first they were proclaimed. Over the portal that leads to the sanctuary of Israel's faith is written, in characters that cannot be effaced, the truth which has been the hope and stay of the human race, the source of all its bliss and inspiration, "the fountain light of all our day, the master light of all our seeing"; it is the truth that there is a central light in the universe, a power that in the past has wrought with wisdom and purposive intelligence the order and harmony of this world of matter, and has shed abroad in the human heart the creative spark which shall some day make aglow this mundane sphere with the warmth and radiance of justice, truth, and loving-kindness. "Let there be light: and there was light."

¶ Let me recall to your remembrance the solemnity and magnificence with which the power of God in the creation of the universe is depicted; and here I cannot possibly overlook that passage of the sacred historian, which has been so frequently commended, in which the importance of the circumstance and the greatness of the idea (the human mind cannot, indeed, well conceive a greater) are no less remarkable than the expressive brevity and simplicity of the language:—"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." The more words you would

accumulate upon this thought, the more you would detract from the sublimity of it; for the understanding quickly comprehends the Divine Power from the effect, and perhaps most completely when it is not attempted to be explained; the perception in that case is the more vivid, inasmuch as it seems to proceed from the proper action and energy of the mind itself. The prophets have also depicted the same conception in poetical language, and with no less force and magnificence of expression. The whole creation is summoned forth to celebrate the praise of the Almighty—

> Let them praise the name of Jehovah;
> For He commanded, and they were created.

And in another place—

> For He spoke, and it was;
> He commanded, and it stood fast.[1]

3. In creation it was the drawing near of God, and the utterance of His word, that dispersed the darkness. In the Incarnation, the Eternal Word, without whom "was not anything made that was made," drew nigh to the fallen world darkened by sin. He came as the Light of the world, and His coming dispersed the darkness. On the first Christmas night this effect of the Incarnation was symbolized when to the "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night . . . the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." The message to the shepherds was a call to them and to the world, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

¶ Thirty years ago last December I went to a place where they practised cannibalism, and before I left those people to go to New Guinea, and start a mission there, so completely were idolatry and cannibalism swept away that a gentleman who tried to get an idol to bring as a curiosity to this country could not find one; they had all been burnt, or disposed of to other travellers. I saw these people myself leaving their cannibalism and their idolatry, and building themselves tolerably good houses. We had our

[1] R. Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 176.

institutions among them, and I had the honour of training a number of young men as native pastors and pioneer teachers. What is the use of talking to me of failure? I have myself baptized more than five thousand of these young people—does that look like failure? In thirteen or fourteen years these men were building houses and churches for themselves, and attending schools, and, if you have read the mission reports, you will know that some of them have gone forth as teachers to New Guinea, and across New Caledonia, and some of the islands of the New Hebrides. The people, too, have been contributing handsomely to the support of the London Missionary Society, for the purpose of sending the Gospel, as they say, to the people beyond. They have seen what a blessing it has been, and their grand idea is to hand it on to those who are still in heathen darkness.[1]

Meet is the gift we offer here to Thee,
Father of all, as falls the dewy night;
Thine own most precious gift we bring—the light
Whereby mankind Thy other bounties see.

Thou art the Light indeed; on our dull eyes
And on our inmost souls Thy rays are poured;
To Thee we light our lamps: receive them, Lord,
Filled with the oil of peace and sacrifice.[2]

[1] S. McFarlane. [2] Prudentius, translated by R. Martin Pope.

In the Image of God.

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In the Image of God.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.—Gen. i. 26, 27.

God made the light and the sun, and they were very good. He made the seas and the mountains, and they were very good. He made the fishes of the water, and the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field—all that wonderful creation of life, which, dull and unbelieving as we are, daily more and more excites our endless wonder and awe and praise—and He saw that it was all very good. He made the herb of the field, everything that grows, everything that lives on the face of this beautiful and glorious world, and all was very good. But of all this good the end was not yet reached. There was still something better to be made. Great lights in the firmament, and stars beyond the reach of the thought of man in the depth of space, sea and mountain, green tree and gay flower, tribes of living creatures in the deep below and the deep above of the sky, four-footed beasts of the earth in their strength and beauty, and worms that live out of the sight and knowledge of all other creatures—these were all as great and marvellous as we know them to be; these were all said to be "very good" by that Voice which had called them into being. Heaven and earth were filled with the majesty of His glory. But they were counted up, one by one, because they were not enough for Him to make, not enough for Him to satisfy Him by their goodness. He reckoned them all up; He pronounced on their excellence. But yet there was something which they had not reached to. There was something still to be made, which should be yet greater, yet more wonderful, yet more good than they. There was a beauty which, with all their beauty, they could not

reach; a perfection which, with all their excellence, they were not meant, or made, to share. They declared the glory of God, but not His likeness. They displayed the handiwork of His wisdom, but they shared not in His spirit, His thoughts, His holiness. So, after their great glory, came a yet greater glory. The living soul, like unto God, had not yet been made. Then said God, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." *There* was made the great step from the wonder and beauty of the world, to the creation of man, with a soul and spirit more wonderful, more excellent, than all the excellence and wonders of the world, because it was made in the likeness of that great and holy and good God who made the world.

1. The foundations of the Biblical doctrine of man are firmly laid, at the very commencement of his history, in the accounts given of his creation. In this narrative of creation in the opening chapter of Genesis we have the noblest of possible utterances regarding man: "God created man in his own image." The manner in which that declaration is led up to is hardly less remarkable than the utterance itself.

2. The last stage in the work of creation has been reached, and the Creator is about to produce His masterpiece. But, as if to emphasize the importance of this event, and to prepare us for something new and exceptional, the form of representation changes. Hitherto the simple fiat of omnipotence has sufficed—"God said." Now the Creator—Elohim—is represented as taking counsel with Himself (for no other is mentioned): "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; and in the next verse, with the employment of the stronger word "created" (*bara*), the execution of this purpose is narrated: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

¶ We are told that the language in which that creation is spoken of, *i.e.* "Let *us* make man," implies the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Deity; in other words, the author, whose avowed object it was to teach the unity of God, so far forgot himself as to teach the contrary. We are told again that we are to found on this account the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no reason, only ignorance, in such a view. The Hebrew

when he wanted to speak of anything majestic, spoke in the plural, not in the singular. He spoke of "heavens," not of heaven. In the same way he spoke of Gods, yet meaning only One. Exactly in the same way the courtesy of modern ages has substituted "you" for "thou"; and here the very form of the writer's language required that he should put "us" instead of "me" in speaking of the majesty of God. Further, to look for the Trinity here would be utterly to reverse the whole method of God's revelation. We know from our own lives that God does things gradually, and we conclude that He did the same with His chosen people. He had to teach them first the unity of the Godhead; the nature of that unity was to be taught afterwards. Conceive what would have been the result in an age of polytheism of teaching the Trinity. The doctrine would have inevitably degenerated into tritheism.[1]

The subject is the creation of man in the image of God. There are two ways of looking at it: (1) in its entirety, as we look at the white light; and (2) in its component parts, as we see the light in a rainbow. Then we have—

I. The Image of God in itself.
   1. Image and Likeness are not distinct.
   2. The Image is not Dominion.
   3. The Image is of the whole Personality.
   4. The Image was not wholly lost.

II. The Parts of the Image.
   1. Reason.
   2. Self-consciousness.
   3. Recognition of Right and Wrong.
   4. Communion with God.
   5. Capacity for Redemption.

Then will follow two practical conclusions, and the text will be set in its place beside two other texts.

I.

The Image of God.

1. No distinction is to be made between the words "image" and "likeness." In patristic and mediæval theology much is

[1] F. W. Robertson.

made of the circumstance that two words are used, the former being taken to mean man's natural endowments, the latter a superadded gift of righteousness. But the words are synonymous. "Likeness" is added to "image" for emphasis. The repetition imparts a rhythmic movement to the language, which may be a faint echo of an old hymn on the glory of man, like Ps. viii.

2. The view that the Divine image consists in dominion over the creatures cannot be held without an almost inconceivable weakening of the figure, and is inconsistent with the sequel, where the rule over the creatures is, by a separate benediction, conferred on man, already made in the image of God. The truth is that the image marks the distinction between man and the animals, and so qualifies him for dominion: the latter is the consequence, not the essence, of the Divine image.

¶ With respect to man himself we are told on the one side that he is dust, "formed of the dust of the earth." The phrase marks our affinity to the lower animals. It is a humbling thing to see how little different the form or man's skeleton is from that of the lower animals; more humbling still when we compare their inward physiological constitution with our own. Herein man is united to the beasts. But "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life": herein he is united to the Deity. The heathen, recognizing in their own way the spiritual in man, tried to bridge over the chasm between it and the earthly by making God more human. The way of revelation, on the contrary, is to make man more godlike, to tell of the Divine idea yet to be realized in his nature. Nor have we far to go to find some of the traces of this Divine in human nature. (1) We are told that God is just and pure and holy. What is the meaning of these words? Speak to the deaf man of hearing, or the blind of light, he knows not what you mean. And so to talk of God as good and just and pure implies that there is goodness, justice, purity, within the mind of man. (2) We find in man the sense of the infinite: just as truly as God is boundless is the soul of man boundless; there is something boundless, infinite, in the sense of justice, in the sense of truth, in the power of self-sacrifice. (3) In man's creative power there is a resemblance to God. He has filled the world with his creations. It is his special privilege to subdue the power of nature to himself. He has forced the lightning to be his messenger, has put a girdle round the earth, has climbed up to the clouds and penetrated down to the depths of the sea. He has turned the forces of Nature against herself; commanding the

winds to help him in braving the sea. And marvellous as is man's rule over external, dead nature, more marvellous still is his rule over animated nature. To see the trained falcon strike down the quarry at the feet of his master, and come back, when God's free heaven is before him; to see the hound use his speed in the service of his master, to take a prey not to be given to himself; to see the camel of the desert carrying man through his own home: all these show the creative power of man and his resemblance to God the Creator. Once more, God is a God of order. The universe in which God reigns is a domain in which order reigns from first to last, in which everything has its place, its appointed position; and the law of man's life, as we have seen, is also order.[1]

> There is no progress in the world of bees,
> However wise and wonderful they are. Lies the bar,
> To wider goals, in that tense strife to please
> A Sovereign Ruler? Forth from flowers to trees
> Their little quest is; not from star to star.
> This is not growth; the mighty avatar
> Comes not to do his work with such as these.[2]

3. The image or likeness is not that of the body only, or of the spirit only, but of the whole personality.

(1) It is perfectly certain that the Hebrews did not suppose this likeness to God to consist in any physical likeness. It is the doctrine of the Old Testament as well as of the New that God is a Spirit; and, although He may have manifested Himself to men in human or angelic shape, He has no visible form, and cannot and must not be represented by any. "Thou sawest no form or similitude" (Deut. iv. 12). The image does not, directly at least, denote external appearance; we must look for the resemblance to God chiefly in man's spiritual nature and spiritual endowments, in his freedom of will, in his self-consciousness, in his reasoning power, in his sense of that which is above nature, the good, the true, the eternal; in his conscience, which is the voice of God within him; in his capacity for knowing God and holding communion with Him; in a word, in all that allies him to God, al that raises him above sense and time and merely material considerations, all that distinguishes him from, and elevates him above, the brutes. So the writer of the apocryphal Book of

[1] F. W. Robertson.

[2] E. W. Wilcox, *Poems of Experience*, 72.

Wisdom says: "God created man to be immortal, and made him an image of his own eternity" (ii. 23).

(2) On the other hand, that this Divine image expresses itself and is seen in man's outward form cannot be denied. In looks, in bearing, in the conscious dignity of rule and dominion, there is a reflection of this Divine image. St. Augustine tries to make out a trinity in the human body, as before in the human mind, which shall correspond in its measure to the Divine Trinity. Nevertheless, he says modestly: "Let us endeavour to trace in man's outward form some kind of footstep of the Trinity, not because it is of itself in the same way (as the inward being) the image of God. For the apostle says expressly that it is the inner man that is renewed after the image of Him that created him; and again, 'Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' Let us then look as far as it is possible in that which perisheth for a kind of likeness to the Trinity; and if not one more express, at least one that may be more easily discerned. The very term 'outward man' denotes a certain similitude to the inward man."

(3) But the truth is that we cannot cut man in two. The inward being and the outward have their correspondences and their affinities, and it is of the compound being *man*, fashioned of the dust of the earth and yet filled with the breath of God, that it is declared that he was created after the image of God. The ground and source of this his prerogative in creation must be sought in the Incarnation. It is this great mystery that lies at the root of man's being. He is like God, he is created in the image of God, he is, in St. Paul's words, the "image and glory of God" (1 Cor. xi. 7), because the Son of God took man's nature in the womb of His virgin mother, thereby uniting for ever the manhood and the Godhead in one adorable Person. This was the Divine purpose before the world was, and hence this creation of man was the natural consummation of all God's work.

4. And it is important to remember that the "image of God," according to Hebrew thought, was not completely lost, however seriously it may have been impaired, by what is described as the Fall. In Gen. v. 1–3, we read, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he

them; . . . and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth"—meaning that, as Adam was created in the image of God, Seth inherited that image. After the flood, God is represented as saying to Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Murder is a kind of sacrilege; to kill a man is to destroy the life of a creature created in the Divine image; the crime is to be punished with death. James, too, in his epistle, insists that the desperate wickedness of the tongue is shown in its reckless disregard of the Divine image in man, "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made in the image of God"; in cursing men we therefore show a want of reverence for God Himself, in whose image they were made, and are guilty of a certain measure of profanity. The "image of God," therefore, according to these ancient Scriptures, does not necessarily include moral and spiritual perfection; it must include the possibility of achieving it; it reveals the Divine purpose that man should achieve it; but man, even after he has sinned, still retains the "image of God" in the sense in which it is attributed to him in the Hebrew Scriptures. It belongs to his *nature*, not to his *character*. Man was made in the "image of God" because he is a free, intelligent, self-conscious, and moral Personality.

¶ I have been told that there is in existence, amongst the curiosities of a Continental museum, a brick from the walls of ancient Babylon which bears the imprint of one of Babylon's mighty kings. Right over the centre of the royal cypher is deeply impressed the footprint of one of the pariah dogs which wandered about that ancient city. It was the invariable custom in ancient Babylon to stamp the bricks used for public works with the cypher of the reigning monarch, and while this particular brick was lying in its soft and plastic state, some wandering dog had, apparently accidentally, trodden upon it. Long ages have passed. The king's image and superscription is visible, but defaced—well-nigh illegible, almost obliterated. The name of that mighty ruler cannot be deciphered; the footprint of the dog is clear, sharply defined, deeply impressed, as on the day on which it was made. So far as any analogy will hold (which is not very far), it is an instructive type of the origin and the dual construction of the human race. Suffer the imagination to wander back—far, far back—into the unthink-

able past, and conceive the All-creating Spirit obeying the paramount necessity of His nature, which is Love, and bringing into existence the race called man. As the outbirth of God—as Divine Spirit differentiated into separate entities—man could not be other than deeply impressed, stamped with the cypher of his Father's image and likeness; the mark of the King is upon him. Obviously, however, he is not yet ready to be built into that great temple of imperishable beauty, fit to be the habitation of the Eternal, which is the ultimate design of God for man. A responsible being, perfected and purified, tested and found faithful, cannot be made; he must grow; and to grow he must be resisted. He must emerge pure from deep contrasts; contradiction being a law of moral life, contradiction must be provided. And therefore, while still in his plastic state, while still in the unhardened, inchoate condition indicated in the sweet pastoral idyll of the Garden of Eden, there comes by the wandering dog—the allegorical impersonation of the animal nature, the embodiment of the lower appetite, the partial will, the Ahriman of the Zoroastrian, the Satan of post-captivity Judaism—and he, metaphorically, puts his foot upon him. Right over the King's impress goes the mark of the beast, apparently defacing the cypher of the King; in other words, humanity gave heed to the lower psychical suggestion, in opposition to the higher dictate of the Divine Spirit. The partial will severed itself from the universal will, and, as it is expressed in theological language, though not in scriptural language, man fell.[1]

Why do I dare love all mankind?
'Tis not because each face, each form
  Is comely, for it is not so;
Nor is it that each soul is warm
  With any Godlike glow.
Yet there's no one to whom's not given
Some little lineament of heaven,
Some partial symbol, at the least, in sign
Of what should be, if it is not, within,
Reminding of the death of sin
  And life of the Divine.
There was a time, full well I know,
  When I had not yet seen you so;
Time was, when few seemed fair;
But now, as through the streets I go,
  There seems no face so shapeless, so
    Forlorn, but that there's something there

[1] B. Wilberforce.

That, like the heavens, doth declare
The glory of the great All-Fair;
And so mine own each one I call;
And so I dare to love you all.[1]

II.

The Parts of the Image.

i. Reason.

1. In speaking of man as being created in the image of God, one must speak first of the *intellectual powers* with which man has been endowed. Nothing can surprise us more than the marvellous results of human science, the power which mankind have exhibited in scanning the works of God, reducing them to law, detecting the hidden harmony in the apparent confusion of creation, demonstrating the fine adjustment and delicate construction of the material universe: and if the wisdom and power of God occupy the first place in the mind of one who contemplates the heavens and the earth, certainly the second place must be reserved for admiration of the wonderful mind with which man has been endowed, the powers of which enable him thus to study the works of God.

2. As regards his intellectual powers, consider that man is, like God, a creator. Works of Art, whether useful or ornamental, are, and are often called, creations. How manifold are the new discoveries, the new inventions, which man draws forth, year after year, from his creative genius—the timepiece, the microscope, the steamship, the steam-carriage, the sun-picture, the electric telegraph! All these things originally lay wrapped up in the human brain, and are its offspring. Look at the whole fabric of civilization, which is built up by the several arts. What a creation it is, how curious, how varied, how wonderful in all its districts! Just as God has His universe, in which are mirrored the eternal, archetypal Ideas of the Divine Mind, so this civilization is Man's universe, the aggregate product of his intelligence and activity. It may possibly suggest itself here that some of the lower animals are producers no less than man.

[1] H. S. Sutton.

And so they are, in virtue of the instinct with which the Almighty has endowed them. The bird is the artisan of her nest, the bee of his cell, the beaver of his hut. But they are artisans only, working by a rule furnished to them, not architects, designing out of their own mental resources. They are producers only, not creators; they never make a variation, in the way of improvement, on foregone productions; and we argue conclusively that because they *do* not make it, they *can* never make it. Instinct dictates to them, as they work, "line upon line, precept upon precept"; but there is no single instance of their rising above this level—of their speculating upon an original design, and contriving the means whereby it may be carried into effect. But the creative faculty of man is still more evident in the ornamental arts, because here, more obviously than in the useful, man works according to no preconceived method or imposed condition, but throws out of his brain that which is new and original. A new melody, a new drama, a new picture, a new poem, are they not all (some more, some less, in proportion to the originality of the conception which is in them) creations? Is not this the very meaning of the word "poem," in the language from which it is drawn—a thing made, a piece of workmanship? So that, in respect of the rich and varied developments of the human mind in the different forms of Art, we need not hesitate to call man a creator. And this is the first aspect under which God is presented to us in Holy Scripture; "In the beginning God *created* the heaven and the earth."

¶ A thing should be denominated from its noblest attribute, as man from reason, not from sense or from anything else less noble. So when we say, "Man lives," it ought to be interpreted, "Man makes use of his reason," which is the special life of man, and the actualization of his noblest part. Consequently he who abandons the use of his reason, and lives by his senses only, leads the life not of a man, but of an animal; as the most excellent Boëthius puts it, he lives the life of an ass. And this I hold to be quite right, because thought is the peculiar act of reason, and animals do not think, because they are not endued with reason. And when I speak of animals, I do not refer to the lower animals only, but I mean to include also those who in outward appearance are men, but spiritually are no better than sheep, or any other equally contemptible brute.[1]

[1] Dante, *Conv.* ii. 8 (trans. by Paget Toynbee).

ii. Self-consciousness.

Man is not only conscious, but also *self*-conscious. He can turn his mind back in reflection on himself; can apprehend himself; can speak of himself as "I." This consciousness of self is an attribute of personality which constitutes a difference, not in degree, but in kind, between the human and the merely animal. No brute has this power. None, however elevated in the scale of power, can properly be spoken of as a person. The sanctity that surrounds personality does not attach to it.

¶ Man's greatest possibility lies in the knowledge of himself. Most people know more of minerals than of men; more about training horses than children. The day is coming when the education of a child will begin at birth; when mothers, who, because of their opportunities, ought to be better psychologists than any university professor, will become not only trained scientific observers of mental phenomena, but directors of it. Even puppies have been so trained that they could surpass many artists in their discrimination between colours, and by this training the brain has been observed to grow enormously. It looks as if man might not only develop the brain he has, but add to it and build up a new brain—and thus practically create a new human race. I hope this may prove true. Man is a spirit, child of the Infinite Spirit, capable of using the best physical machinery with ease; better machinery than he now has.[1]

iii. Recognition of Right and Wrong.

The great distinction between right and wrong belongs to man alone. An animal may be taught that it is not to do certain things, but it is because these things are contrary to its master's wish, not because they are wrong. Some persons have endeavoured to make out that the distinction between right and wrong on the part of ourselves is quite arbitrary, that we call that right which we find on the whole to be advantageous, and that wrong which on the whole tends to mischief; but the conscience of mankind is against this scheme of philosophy. That the wickedness of mankind has made fearful confusion between right and wrong, and that men very often by their conduct appear to approve of that which they ought not to approve, is very true; and that men may fall, by a course of vice,

[1] C. M. Cobern.

into such a condition that their moral sense is fearfully blunted, is also true: but this does not prove the absence of a sense of right and wrong from a healthy mind, any more than the case of ever so many blind men would prove that there is no such thing as sight. No—the general conscience of mankind admits the truth which is assumed in Scripture, namely, that man, however far gone from original righteousness, does nevertheless recognize the excellence of what is good, that he delights in the law of God after the inward man, even though he may find another law in his members bringing him into captivity. This sense of what is right and good, which existed in man in his state of purity, and which has survived the fall and forms the very foundation upon which we can build hopes of his restoration to the favour of God, is a considerable portion of that which is described as God's image in which man was created.

¶ Darwin opens his chapter on the moral sense with this acknowledgment: "I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that, of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important. This sense is summed up in that short but imperious word, 'ought,' so full of high significance. It is the most noble of all the attributes of man."[1]

¶ What! will I ca' a man my superior, because he's cleverer than mysel'? Will I boo down to a bit o' brains, ony mair than to a stock or a stane? Let a man prove himsel' better than me—honester, humbler, kinder, wi' mair sense o' the duty o' man, an' the weakness o' man—an' that man I'll acknowledge—that man's my king, my leader, though he war as stupid as Eppe Dalgleish, that couldna count five on her fingers, and yet keepit her drucken father by her ain hands' labour for twenty-three yeers.[2]

¶ Devoid of the very taint of ambition, Dean Church obtained a singular authority, which was accepted without cavil or debate. Such an authority was a witness to the force and beauty of high moral character. It testified to the supremacy which belongs, of right and of necessity, to conscience. His special gifts would, under all conditions, have played a marked part; but they do not account for the impressive sway exercised over such multitudes by his personality.[3]

[1] G. E. Weeks. [2] Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke*.
[3] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 233.

God hath no shape, nor can the artist's hands
His figure frame in shining gold or wood,
God's holy image—God-sent—only stands
Within the bosoms of the wise and good.[1]

iv. Communion with God.

The sense of right and wrong may be regarded as part of that nature originally imparted to man, by which he was fitted to hold communion with God. God called other creatures into existence by His word, and so made them live; but man He inspired with His own breath, and so gave him a portion of His own Divine life. And corresponding to this difference of beginning was the after history. God blessed the living creatures which He had made, pronounced them very good, and bade them increase and multiply; but with man He *held communion.* "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. iii. 8).

¶ To me, the verse has, and can have, no other signification than this—that the soul of man is a mirror of the mind of God. A mirror, dark, distorted, broken—use what blameful names you please of its state—yet in the main, a true mirror, out of which alone, and by which alone, we can know anything of God at all.

"How?" the reader, perhaps, answers indignantly. "I know the nature of God by revelation, not by looking into myself."

Revelation to what? To a nature incapable of receiving truth? That cannot be; for only to a nature capable of truth, desirous of it, distinguishing it, feeding upon it, revelation is possible. To a being undesirous of it, and hating it, revelation is impossible. There can be none to a brute, or fiend. In so far, therefore, as you love truth, and live therein, in so far revelation can exist for you;—and in so far, your mind is the image of God's.

But consider, further, not only *to* what, but *by* what, is the revelation. By sight? or word? If by sight, then to eyes which see justly. Otherwise, no sight would be revelation. So far, then, as your sight is just, it is the image of God's sight.

If by words—how do you know their meanings? Here is a short piece of precious word revelation, for instance—"God is love."

[1] Statius, translated by W. E. A. Axon.

Love! yes. But what is *that*? The revelation does not tell you that, I think. Look into the mirror and you will see. Out of your own heart, you may know what love is. In no other possible way—by no other help or sign. All the words and sounds ever uttered, all the revelations of cloud, or flame, or crystal, are utterly powerless. They cannot tell you, in the smallest point, what love means. Only the broken mirror can.

Here is more revelation. "God is just!" Just! What is that? The revelation cannot help you to discover. You say it is dealing equitably or equally. But how do you discern the equality? Not by inequality of mind; not by a mind incapable of weighing, judging, or distributing. If the lengths seem unequal in the broken mirror, for you they are unequal; but if they seem equal, then the mirror is true. So far as you recognize equality, and your conscience tells you what is just, so far your mind is the image of God's; and so far as you do *not* discern this nature of justice or equality, the words, "God is just," bring no revelation to you.[1]

¶ I have often imagined to myself the large joy which must have filled the mind of Aristarchus of Samos when the true conception of the solar system first dawned upon him, unsupported though it was by any of the mathematical demonstrations which have since convinced all educated men of its truth, and constraining belief solely on the ground of its own simple and beautiful order. I could suppose such a belief very strong, and almost taking such a form as this:—It is so harmonious, so self-consistent, that it *ought* to be so, therefore it *must* be so. And surely this is nothing more than might be looked for in regard to spiritual realities. If man is created for fellowship with God there must exist within him, notwithstanding all the ravages of sin, capacities which will recognize the light and life of eternal truth when it is brought close to him. Without such capacities revelation would in fact be impossible.[2]

A fire-mist and a planet,
  A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
  And caves where the cave-men dwell.
Then a sense of law and beauty,
  And a face turned from the clod,—
Some call it evolution,
  And others call it God.

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. v. pt. ix. ch. i. §§ 11–13.
[2] Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.

Like tides on a crescent seabeach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in;
Come from the mystic ocean,
Whose rim no foot has trod,—
Some of us call it longing,
And others call it God.

v. Capacity for Redemption.

The possibility of redemption after man had sinned is as great a mark as any of the image of God impressed upon him. When man has fallen he is not left to himself, as one whose fall is a trifling matter in the great economy of God's creation. It was because His own image had been impressed on man that God undertook to redeem him; it was because that image, though defaced, had not been wholly destroyed, that such redemption was possible. Yes—thanks to God—we are in some sense in His image still; much as we incline to sin, yet we feel in our hearts and consciences that sin is death and that holiness is life. Much as we swerve from the ways of God, yet our consciences still tell us that those ways are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace; foolishly as we have behaved by seeking happiness in breaking God's commands, yet our hearts testify to our folly and our better judgment condemns us. Here then are the traces of God's image still, and because these traces remain, therefore there is hope for us in our fallen condition. God will yet return and build up His Tabernacle which has been thrown down; and it may be that the glory of the latter house will through His infinite mercy be even greater than that of the first.

¶ There is a story in English history of a child of one of our noble houses who, in the last century, was stolen from his house by a sweep. The parents spared no expense or trouble in their search for him, but in vain. A few years later the lad happened to be sent by the master into whose hands he had then passed to sweep the chimneys in the very house from which he had been stolen while too young to remember it. The little fellow had been sweeping the chimney of one of the bedrooms, and fatigued with the exhausting labour to which so many lads, by the cruel custom of those times, were bound, he quite forgot where he was, and flinging himself upon the clean bed dropped

off to sleep. The lady of the house happened to enter the room. At first she looked in disgust and anger at the filthy black object that was soiling her counterpane. But all at once something in the expression of the little dirty face, or some familiar pose of the languid limbs, drew her nearer with a sudden inspiration, and in a moment she had clasped once more in her motherly arms her long-lost boy.[1]

¶ Travellers to the islands of the South Seas reported—that is, such of them as came back—that the natives were fierce and cannibal, bearing the brand of savagery even upon their faces. But Calvert and Paton went there, and proved that this savage countenance was only a palimpsest scrawled by the Devil over a manuscript of the Divine finger. To us the face of a Chinaman is dull and impassive. It awakens no interest; it stirs no affection. Then why have our friends Pollard and Dymond gone out to Yunnan? Because the Spirit of God has opened their eyes, so that behind all that stolid exterior they can see a soul capable of infinite possibilities of godlike nobility, just as the genius of the great sculptor could see an angel in the shapeless block of marble. And even already their inspired insight has been verified: they have seen that sluggish nature move; they have watched that hard, emotionless Chinese face as it has glowed with the joy that illumines him who knows that Christ is his Saviour. It is as when in the restoration of an old English church the workmen begin to take down the bare whitewashed wall, and the lath and plaster, as they are stripped off, reveal the hidden beauty of some ancient fresco or reredos. Let a new race of men be discovered to-day, and the true missionary will not hesitate to start for them to-morrow. Before he has heard anything of their history or their customs, before he has learnt a word of their language, there is one thing that he knows about them—that, however deeply they may be sunk in barbarism, they are not so low that the arm of Christ cannot reach them.[1]

Count not thyself a starveling soul,
  Baulked of the wealth and glow of life,
Destined to grasp, of this rich whole,
  Some meagre measure through thy strife.

Ask not of flower or sky or sea
  Some gift that in their giving lies;
Their light and wonder are of thee,
  Made of thy spirit through thine eyes.

[1] H. W. Horwill.

All meaningless the primrose wood,
All messageless the chanting shore,
Hadst thou not in thee gleams of good
And whispers of God's evermore.[1]

III.

Two Practical Conclusions.

There are two facts of immense practical importance for us which follow from the one momentous fact of creation.

1. *We owe to God our being and therefore we owe to God ourselves.*—What God makes, He has an absolute right to. There is a corresponding fundamental principle in social ethics among men; and in the case of God's relation to His creatures the principle is yet more fundamental and absolute, even as the case itself is altogether unique. The obedience of nature to the Creator is unvarying, but it is only the blind obedience of necessity. Of the spiritual creation, on the other hand, the obedience must be free, but it is nevertheless as rightfully and absolutely claimed. Indeed, if it were possible, God's claims on those whom He has made in His own likeness are of even superior obligation. For the existence which they have received is existence at its highest worth, and to them is given the capacity to recognize and appreciate the paramount sovereignty of creative power as inspired and transfigured by creative love.

¶ The disinclination to be under an obligation is always more or less natural to us, and it is particularly natural to those who are in rude health and high spirits, who have never yet known anything of real sorrow or of acute disease. It grows with that jealous sentiment of personal independence which belongs to an advanced civilization; and if it is distantly allied to one or two of the better elements of human character, it is more closely connected with others that are base and unworthy. The Eastern emperor executed the courtier who, by saving his life, had done him a service which could never be forgotten, perhaps never repaid; but this is only an extreme illustration of what may be found in the feelings of everyday life. A darker example of the same tendency is seen in the case of men who have wished a father in his grave, not on account of any misunderstanding, not from any coarse desire of succeeding to the family property,

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 57.

but because in the father the son saw a person to whom he owed not education merely, but his birth into the world, and felt that so vast a debt made him morally insolvent as long as his creditor lived. If men are capable of such feelings towards each other, we can understand much that characterizes their thought about and action towards God. By His very Existence He seems to inflict upon them a perpetual humiliation. To feel day by day, hour by hour, that there is at any rate One Being before whom they are as nothing; to whom they owe originally, and moment by moment, all that they are and have; who so holds them in His hand that no human parallel can convey a sense of the completeness of their dependence upon His good pleasure; and against whose decisions they have neither plea nor remedy:—this they cannot bear. Yet if God exists, this, and nothing less, is strictly true.[1]

2. *We can co-operate with God in His creating, preserving, and redeeming activity.*—Though now "subject to vanity" and (not as to locality, but as to apprehension) far from his heavenly home, the assurance of man's ultimate perfection rests upon the impregnable foundation that there is within him a Divine potency. With this Divine potency it is his duty and privilege to co-operate. Man is begotten, but he is being made—

Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can escape
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger, or of ape?
Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

All about him shadow still, but, while the races flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker, "It is finished. Man is made."[2]

IV.

Three Texts.

Take these three texts together—

Gen. i. 27.—"God created man in his own image."

Rom. iii. 23.—"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Heb. ii. 9.—"But we see Jesus."

[1] H. P. Liddon. [2] Tennyson, *The Making of Man.*

The first text describes man as he was when he first came from the hand of his Creator; the second describes man as he is, as we know him, in the condition to which sin has reduced him; the third text describes man as he will be when his redemption is complete. He has not yet attained to the supremacy, the character and glory, which God preordained for him, but Christ has attained all these. We see Jesus crowned, and all things put under Him, and we shall be crowned also when our full redemption is reached.

1. *In His own image.*—The first great truth of the Bible in regard to man is this, that he was made in the image of God. He is the Creator's noblest earthly work. Out of the dust of the earth God fashioned man's body, and then breathed into it the breath of life. Science tells us that man's body is the culmination and recapitulation of all prior forms of life. But some of its highest and most authoritative teachers acknowledge that man as man is a distinct creation. Wallace, for instance, maintains that "man's bodily structure is identical with the animal world, and is derived from it of which it is the culmination"; but he declares emphatically that "man's entire nature and all his faculties, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, are not derived from the lower animals, but have an origin wholly distinct; that the working of material laws does not account for the exaltation of humanity. These are from the spiritual universe, and are the result of fresh and extra manifestations of its power." Let us try to realize this great truth. The body, the meanest part of man, is the culmination of all created forms of life. But between man and the highest animal there is an infinite difference. How great then is man: "A little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour"! He stands midway between the material and the spiritual, the manifestation of both. Dust and deity. Below, he is related to the earth; above, he is related to the heavens. He claims kinship with seraphs; nay, he is God's own offspring. In man God objectified Himself, made Himself visible. God intended man to be the incarnation of Himself, for He "made man in His own image." What a stupendous truth! Herder once exclaimed, "Give me a great truth that I may feed upon it." Here it is. Man is the incarnation of God.

¶ "I am staring," said MacIan at last, "at that which shall judge us both."

"Oh yes," said Turnbull, in a tired way; "I suppose you mean God."

"No, I don't," said MacIan, shaking his head; "I mean him."

And he pointed to the half-tipsy yokel who was ploughing, down the road.

"I mean him. He goes out in the early dawn; he digs or he ploughs a field. Then he comes back and drinks ale, and then he sings a song. All your philosophies and political systems are young compared to him. All your hoary cathedrals—yes, even the Eternal Church on earth is new compared to him. The most mouldering gods in the British Museum are new facts beside him. It is he who in the end shall judge us all. I am going to ask him which of us is right."

"Ask that intoxicated turnip-eater——"

"Yes—which of us is right. Oh, you have long words and I have long words; and I talk of every man being the image of God; and you talk of every man being a citizen and enlightened enough to govern. But, if every man typifies God, there is God. If every man is an enlightened citizen, there is your enlightened citizen. The first man one meets is always man. Let us catch him up."[1]

2. *All have sinned.*—Man has fallen by disobedience. It was not merely the eating of the fruit; it was the principle involved in the act that proved fatal. What was that—what but rebellion? The conflict of the human will with the Divine. That involved death. By that act the soul of man passed from spiritual health and fell below the fulness of life, and in that sense died. And Adam's sin was diffusive. He was the first of the race. His sin entered into human nature, and the poison passed from generation to generation with ever deeper taint, so that every life repeats the sin of Adam. There is in it the refusal of the human will to submit to God's will. Thus it is absolutely and universally true that all have sinned and come short of that life which is the glory of God. We sometimes boast of our ancestors, but if we went far enough back we should have little to boast of. Think of the filth, the falseness, the lust, the cruelty, the drunkenness, the ferocity of the races out of which we have sprung. Look around you! Is not the text true? In many, reason is prostituted to

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *The Ball and the Cross.*

evil. The free choice of man becomes the fixed choice of evil; myriads are the abject slaves of sin. Conscience has been so often disobeyed that its writs no longer run in the life, or it is so seared that men can commit the foulest crimes without blushing. The spirit has been so neglected that no prayer to God ever rises to the lip and no thought of God enters the mind. Think of the crimes which stain the pages of our newspapers, and the numberless crimes known only to God. Even among the most intellectual there are sins of the darkest hue. We have been rudely reminded within the last few years that our boasted æstheticism and culture may be but thin veils which hide vices we fain hoped were dead two thousand years ago. How bitter and ceaseless has been the conflict between the conscience and the will in all of us! How powerful, almost invincible, is the habit of sin! We never realize our bondage until we seek to break away. When the younger son of the parable stood on his father's doorstep with his patrimony in his pocket and his face toward the far country, at that moment he was a prodigal. We are all prodigals. Though we may never have reached the swine-troughs we have turned our backs on God.

¶ In one of his books, *Salted with Fire*, George MacDonald tells of a young woman who had been led astray. A warm-hearted minister found her one night on his doorstep, and guessing her story, brought her into his home. His little daughter upstairs with her mother, asked, "Mamma, who is it papa has in the library?" And the wise mother quietly replied, "It is an angel, dear, who has lost her way, and papa is telling her the way back."[1]

3. *But we see Jesus.*—"Made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour, all things put in subjection under him." We see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus. He was crowned. He put all things under Him; and humanity in Him shall yet attain this glorious supremacy. When Jesus trod the pathways of this world, limited as He was by His incarnation, how like a conqueror He worked! He was master of all the forces of Nature. The sea became to Him an unyielding pavement of adamant. When the storm arose He had but to say, "Peace!" and the huge, green, yeasty billows lay down at His feet like sleeping babes. Disease fled at His touch.

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 18.

The dead came forth at His call. And though He yielded to the yoke of death He did it like a conqueror. "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." He died of His own free choice. And on the third morning He broke through the barriers of the tomb and came forth *the Victor* of the dark realm of Hades. He was crowned also in the moral and spiritual world. He lived a life of perfect victory over sin. All the assaults of sin beat unavailingly against the rock of His pure manhood. He mingled with men of the lowest order, but He remained without spot, and went back to God as pure as when He came from God. Christ was the first crowned of a new race. He made a new beginning, and humanity in Him will reach His level at the last. We see not yet all things put under man, but *we see Jesus.*

¶ Dr. Barnardo used to illustrate the benefits of his redemptive work by taking a group of "specimens" to the platform with him. Look at that boy there on the right. Poor lad, he has not yet all things put under him; no, indeed, he was picked up only an hour ago off the streets. Dirt is not put under him, and ignorance is not put under him, and vice is not put under him. He is the slave of all three. But look at that lad on the extreme left. Sixteen years of age, clean, well dressed, intelligent, and virtuous. He has been three years in the Home. What a contrast! He has put all things under him. Even so it is with humanity. It is being transformed by Christ. Some are at the base of the ladder of progress and redemption, others are ascending, and others have again entered into the glory of God. Like Christ, humanity shall have all things put under it.

Oh, fairest legend of the years,
With folded wings, go silently!
Oh, flower of knighthood, yield your place
To One who comes from Galilee.

To wounded feet that shrink and bleed,
But press and climb the narrow way,
The same old way our own must step,
For ever, yesterday, to-day.

For soul can be what soul hath been,
And feet can tread where feet have trod,
Enough to know that once the clay
Hath worn the features of the God.[1]

[1] *Daily Song*, p. 151.

¶ One of the most precious memories of my life is that of my own father's victorious death. After thirty years in the ministry he passed away while yet in the prime of manhood. He died of consumption, and at the last was very feeble; so feeble, indeed, that he could scarcely make his voice audible. The last night came. He whispered to my mother again and again, "It is well with me, it is well with me." Then he said, "When the last moment comes, if I feel I have the victory I will tell you . . . but if I cannot speak I will raise my hand." As the grey morning light stole into the death-chamber my mother saw that the end had come. His lips moved. She stooped to catch the words, but there was no sound; his power of articulation had gone. The next moment he seemed to realize it, and, with a smile on his dying face, he lifted his thin, worn hand for a few seconds, and then it fell on the pillow, and he was not, for God had taken him.[1]

O, may I triumph so,
When all my warfare's past,
And, dying, find my latest foe
Under my feet at last.

[1] J. T. Parr.

Fellowship.

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FELLOWSHIP.

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou?—Gen. iii. 8, 9.

IF this is veritable history, it is also parable. It is the record of the first fear, the first blush, the first self-concealment. So common are all these experiences to-day, that it is difficult to conceive the time of innocence and assurance when they did not exist. Yet man, made in the image of God, enjoyed unclouded communion with his Creator. There was no withdrawal of light on the part of God, and there were no mists of doubt exhaled from earth to obscure its clear shining. God talked with man. Adam delighted in the voice of God. But in the evil hour of temptation all this was changed. Disobedience unclothed the conscience. Its garment of innocence was lost, and they knew that they were naked. The spiritual condition which their sin had produced was symbolized in the physical. They mistook the sign for the substance. The fig-leaf aprons were their first vain effort. But this was not enough. The approach of God convinced them of its insufficiency, and so they sought shelter among the trees of the garden. But even here God followed them with mingled words of justice and of love. This is the fountain-head of all earth's woes. This is the little cloud of sins which has overspread the heavens with the darkness of despair, and threatens now the storm of wrath. This is the beginning of that great necessity, which, foreseen, had already in the council of eternity drawn forth the pitying love of God, and had already secured the acceptance and condescension of the Son of God, as the second Adam of the race.

¶ Nearly all the most eminent Biblical scholars are now agreed that the clue to the meaning of this third chapter of Genesis is to be found by regarding it as an allegory or parable rather

than as an historical document in the modern sense of the term. Even a scholar so cautious and conservative as Dean Church says in one of his books, "Adam stands for us all—for all living souls who from generation to generation receive and hand on the breath of human life." The author of what Archbishop Temple has called "the allegory of the garden of Eden" is both a poet and a prophet. As a poet he has created an ideal conception of the typical natural man. As a prophet he spells out for us, in language coloured by Eastern imagery, the drama of a great crisis in the history of mankind. Look at the story of what is called (though not in the Bible) the "fall of Adam," superficially, and you may regard it as a legend, such as those of Hercules and Prometheus. Look at it deeply and seriously, and you see in it the inspired work of a master mind, gifted with profound spiritual insight, who sees the greatness of man even in ruin, who knows what sin means, and what fruit it bears. It is not the voice of a chronicler of past events that is heard here. It is the voice of a preacher who speaks to the soul in image and parable. It is for the sake of the spiritual truth wrapped up in it that the story is told.[1]

The text brings before us three great fundamental facts—

I. Man is made for Fellowship with God—"They heard the voice (*or* sound, *i.e.* steps) of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day."

II. Sin breaks the Fellowship—"The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

III. God seeks to restore it—"And the Lord God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou?"

I.

The Fellowship.

1. *What is Fellowship?*

Real religion stands or falls with the belief in a personal God, and in realizing the need of communion with Him. When once we destroy, or tamper with, the conviction that we are living, or should be living, in spiritual contact with a Divine Being who has revealed Himself to us in His Son, worship ceases to have any real meaning. We may not be able to certify or interpret to

[1] J. W. Shepard.

others this contact with God. But the deepest of truths is that God is not far from any one of us, and it is the Divine Spirit within us that seeks and strives for communication with our Heavenly Father.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God made us to speak to Him, not only in formal prayers on stated occasions, but in the silent language of meditation, and in the effort implied in maintaining our belief in His presence and nearness to us. It is a sure sign of something being wrong with us if we shrink from this great thought, and take refuge in any view of life that tends to hide from us the solemn mystery of standing before the living God.

Lift to the firmament your eye,
Thither God's path pursue;
His glory, boundless as the sky,
O'erwhelms the wondering view.

The forests in His strength rejoice;
Hark! how on th' evening breeze,
As once of old, the Lord God's voice
Is heard among the trees.[1]

2. *How may it be enjoyed?*

There are two ways especially in which the fellowship between God and man may be enjoyed.

(1) *By meditation in the quiet of the evening.*—God was heard walking in the garden "in the cool of the day." It may be that the phrase means no more than the evening breeze. God comes to us all more or less distinctly in the evening—it is a time for leisure, rest, reflection, and worship. After the toil and tumult of the day it is a period of hush and quiet, and amid the stillness we can hear God's voice borne on the wind.

Morn is the time to act, noon to endure;
But oh! if thou wouldst keep thy spirit pure,
Turn from the beaten path by worldlings trod,
Go forth at eventide, in heart to walk with God.

[1] J. Montgomery.

¶ It is only in the cool of the day that I can hear Thy footsteps, O my God. Thou art ever walking in the garden. Thy presence is abroad everywhere and always; but it is not everywhere or always that I can hear Thee passing by. The burden and heat of the day are too strong for me. The struggles of life excite me, the ambitions of life perturb me, the glitter of life dazzles me; it is all thunder and earthquake and fire. But when I myself am still, I catch Thy still small voice, and then I know that Thou art God. Thy peace can only speak to my peacefulness, Thy rest can only be audible to my calm; the harmony of Thy tread cannot be heard by the discord of my soul. Therefore, betimes I would be alone with Thee, away from the heat and the battle. I would feel the cool breath of Thy Spirit, that I may be refreshed once more for the strife. I would be fanned by the breezes of heaven, that I may resume the dusty road and the dolorous way. Not to avoid them do I come to Thee, but that I may be able more perfectly to bear them. Let me hear Thy voice in the garden in the cool of the day.[1]

This life hath hours that hold
  The soul above itself, as at a show
A child, upon a loving arm and bold
  Uplifted safe, upon the crowd below
  Smiles down serene,—I speak to them that know
This thing whereof I speak, that none can guess,
That none can paint,—what marks hath Blessedness,
What characters whereby it may be told?
Such hours with things that never can grow old
Are shrined. One eve, 'mid autumns far away,
I walked along beside a river; grey
And pale was earth, the heavens were grey and pale,
As if the dying year and dying day
Sobbed out their lives together, wreaths of mist
Stole down the hills to shroud them while they kissed
Each other sadly; yet behind this veil
Of drearness and decay my soul did build,
To music of its own, a temple filled
With worshippers beloved that hither drew
  In silence; then I thirsted not to hear
  The voice of any friend, nor wished for dear
Companion's hand firm clasped in mine; I knew,
Had such been with me, they had been less near.[2]

[1] George Matheson. [2] Dora Greenwell.

(2) *In corporate worship.* — When one joins a group of worshippers, one enters to take one's part in the ordered response of the Church universal to the outgoing of the heart of God; one enters a region where heaven dips down to earth, while earth lifts up "blind hands" to heaven; one is at the meeting-place of the two orders, the temporal and the eternal; one is standing with one's fellows before the rending veil. And there are other gains to be got from corporate worship. There is outlook. There is "the restfulness of its wide horizons." The daily work of most of us is done within a very narrow sphere of interest and enterprise. In the fellowship of the Church we have a unique opportunity of emerging from these limitations. No man can enter into the fullest liberty if he is alone with nature and the God of nature. An essential element in the vision of far horizons is the presence of a body of aspirant life. It is "with all saints," not with nature, that we comprehend the love of God. It is where two or three are gathered together to search into His name, that He is in the midst. And another gain to be obtained from corporate worship is quiet of spirit. Who has not known perplexities drop away, who has not seen problems solved, in the contemplation and experience of the fellowship of the Church? Moods that have distressed us have been dispelled by merely seeing them reflected in the experience of fellow-worshippers, whether of our own or of other ages. Controversies which have vexed us have been settled in the light of the broad, plain moralities of the Gospel. Exaggerations of view have been checked by the thought of the manifold variety of catholic Christian experience. Forgotten factors in difficult questions have come to light as we have learned to look at life from the point of view of God's residence in the collective body of His redeemed. We have repeated the Psalmist's experience: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I."

Wandering thro' the city
My heart was sick and sore;
Full of a feverish longing
I entered an old church door.

Dark were the aisles and gloomy:
  Type of my troubled breast.
Mournful and sad I paced there,
  Eager to be at rest.

Sudden the sunshine lighted
  The arches with golden stream,
Chasing the darksome shadows
  With brightly-glancing beam.

A chord pealed forth from the organ
  Tender, and soft, and sweet:
Trembling along the pavement
  Like the tread of the angels' feet.

The light as a voice from Heaven,
  Bid all my care to cease;
The chord, as a song of Seraphs,
  Whispered of God's own peace.[1]

II.

The Separation.

The first sin of Scripture is in some sort the type of all our sins. They grow out of a common root. In the language of morals, they are a revolt against the pressure of rules and obligations felt to be in conflict with passion or personal desires. In the language of the Bible, they spring from a state of rebellion against God and the order established by Him.

The author of the record of Genesis shows us in poetic imagery the inward as well as the outward consequences of any deliberate act of rebellion. All sin, until with repentance comes pardon, alters the relations between the creature and the Creator. An estranging cloud comes between the soul and God. And this means bitter shame, haunting fear—the shame of degradation, the fear of death. That concealing cloud cannot be conjured away by any human arts. So long as reconciliation is barred by impenitence and unbelief, the cloud will be there. This permanent fact of man's spiritual nature is portrayed in the words, "The man

[1] John A. Jennings.

and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."

The heavens above are clear
In splendour of the sapphire, cold as steel,
No warm soft cloud floats over them, no tear
Will fall on earth to tell us if they feel;
But ere the pitiless day
Dies into evening grey,
  Along the western line
  Rises a fiery sign
That doth the glowing sky incarnadine.[1]

i. How does the loss of God's fellowship show itself?

1. *In a sense of Shame.*—The first feeling of the man and his wife was an indistinct sense of shame, a desire to hide themselves from one another and from all the world. "Their eyes, both of them, were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons." Until then they had been like little children, not knowing shame, because they knew not sin; but from that day forward they and their posterity had to carry both sin and shame about with them wherever they went.

¶ My colleague at the City Temple told me of a young fellow whom a friend of his tried to save, and in the end succeeded, I am glad to say. This poor lad was an adopted son; he seems to have inherited a weak nature, or if he did not inherit one—for I do not think there is so very much in heredity, after all—at any rate, loose habits, unworthy behaviour, evil company, engendered in him a course of action, and created a character in itself evil. He robbed his adoptive parents, and fled from home. When he was found and brought back almost to the doorstep he refused to enter. "Why? Are you afraid to face them?" The answer was, "I cannot look them in the eye."[2]

2. *In Fear.*—In no way does the tragedy of Eden come out with more picturesque realism than in these hiding figures fleeing from the face of the God against whom they have sinned. But yesterday the presence of God was their chief delight. It made the flowers more beautiful; it added to the fragrance of the blossoming trees; it gave more exquisite harmony to the singing

[1] Dora Greenwell. [2] R. J. Campbell.

of the birds; it was the perfection of their delight and their joy. Fear was not in all their thoughts, and they gazed rapturously into the countenance of their Heavenly Father as a child gazes with unspeakable confidence and trust into the eyes of its mother. But now there is nothing they dread so much as the face of God. And we watch them as they hasten into the thickest part of the garden and vainly try to hide themselves from the eye of their Creator.

¶ A child knows at once what it is to love God; but you must force its understanding into an unnatural course to teach it that God is a Person to be afraid of. That terror of God, which cannot spring out of holiness and innocence, comes of itself, however, without teaching or forcing, with sin.[1]

¶ One of the first results of sin is to awaken the conscience and make it an accuser and pursuer. All great literature abounds in illustrations of this theme. No man deals with it with more wisdom and fidelity than Shakespeare. We have all had on our lips at one time or other those words of Hamlet in which he declares that "Conscience does make cowards of us all." And in the tragedy of "King Richard III." Shakespeare makes a wicked man say of his conscience, "I'll not meddle with it: it is a dangerous thing: it makes a man a coward: a man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; he cannot swear, but it checks him" (Act I. scene iv.).

¶ Spurgeon tells of an Englishman who was so constantly in debt and so frequently arrested by the bailiffs that on one occasion, when going by a fence, the sleeve of his coat catching on a nail, he turned round and said, obeying the instinctive fear of his heart, "I don't owe you anything, sir." He thought the picket was a bailiff.[2]

3. *In Excuses.*—All our worst sins are marked by a certain recklessness of consequences. "Never mind what may come of it all," we say to ourselves, "let us brave the worst." And when the consequences do come—as come they must, sooner or later—we throw the blame on things or persons other than ourselves. Someone's subtlety beguiled us into thinking that rebellion against the moral order would be a glorious gain. Or else we cry out against society or our inherited temperament as responsible for our misdoings. We complain dolefully of the demoralizing tendencies of modern life. It is no fault of ours, we say, if we,

[1] J. H. Blunt. [2] L. A. Banks.

too, drift with the stream, and reach out our hands to secure the delights of the passing hour. So, in our blindness and infatuation, we excuse ourselves. And our eyes are opened when we learn in sorrow and suffering that one sinful act may spread its contaminating fibres through the whole of our life.

¶ The literature of imagination—much of the fiction of our time and some of its poetry—is skilful in painting the wicked thing, until it appears gay and brilliant and free. There are philosophies and theologies which apologize for it, and teach us to view it almost as a necessity for our fuller life, or as a halting-place in the march of the soul to what is higher and holier. Society has a hundred affectations and excuses that hide its foulness, as Greek assassins concealed their death-bringing daggers under the greenery of myrtle leaves. It is a fall upward, we are told, and not a fall downward. On the Amazon a famous naturalist discovered a spider which spread itself out as a flower; but the insects lighting on it found destruction instead of sweetness and honey. Our sin is our sin, evil, poisonous, fatal, although it transmutes itself into an angel of goodness.[1]

4. *By Hiding.*—"The man and his wife hid themselves." Is not this hiding among the trees of the garden a symbolical representation of what sinners have been doing ever since?—have they not all been endeavouring to escape from God, and to lead a separated and independent life? They have been fleeing from the Divine presence, and hiding themselves amid *any* trees that would keep that presence far enough away.

¶ Professor Phelps tells of a burglar who rifled an unoccupied dwelling by the seaside. He ransacked the rooms, and heaped his plunder in the parlour. There were evidences that here he sat down to rest. On a bracket in the corner stood a marble bust of Guido's *Ecce Homo*—Christ crowned with thorns. The guilty man had taken it in his hands and examined it—it bore the marks of his fingers—but he replaced it with its face turned to the wall, as if he would not have even the sightless eyes of the marble Saviour look upon his deeds of infamy.[2]

ii. They hid themselves.

The attempt to hide oneself may be made in different ways.

1. One way is by *careless living*, by such levity as that of the Athenians who scoffed at St. Paul when he spoke to them of the

[1] A. Smellie. [2] E. Morgan.

resurrection of the dead. Men who are devoured by a foolish appetite for the last new thing, the last word of science and philosophy, have ceased to care for truth, and have become worshippers of idols. To such, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ must remain for ever an unknown God. They have forfeited the power of seeing the Invisible, and of worshipping in spirit and in truth. There was no Church at Athens. There never can be a Church, in the real sense, composed of men and women who make of a merely intellectual interest in science and literature, in the burning questions of the day, an excuse for shirking the serious aspects of life and the spiritual facts that lie at the foundation of religion. "Let not God speak with us, lest we die." This reluctance to hear the deeper chords struck, this desire to run away from the deeper thoughts and experiences that pierce the conscience and trouble the mind, is deeply embedded in human nature. The dearest wish of many among us is to be let alone; to be allowed to live our lives out to the end in a sort of enchanted garden, where no voice from the deeps may reach us, and we may catch no glimpse of the Cherubim and the flaming sword.

¶ "How now, Sir John!" quoth I: "what, man! be o' good cheer." So a' cried out, "God, God, God!" three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God. I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet. So a' bade me lay more clothes on his feet.[1]

2. Another way of hiding from God is the *refusal to listen to the voice of conscience* when it condemns us, the ingrained habit of slipping away from reminders of duties neglected and obligations left unfulfilled, so finely delineated by George Eliot in the character of Tito Melema. Wherever sincerity is, the quality of perfect openness and clearness of soul, the word of Christ will reach and penetrate the heart. To hear the voice of God calling us with joy and gladness we must be clear from vice, clear from self-indulgence and self-satisfaction. It is our sins, and nothing else, that separate us from Him; our sins, too, that make us shun those who are to us a sort of embodied conscience. "I was obliged to get away from him as fast as I could," said a notorious profligate of the saintly Fénelon, "else he would have made me

[1] Mrs. Quickly in *Henry v.*, Act II. sc. iii. l. 17.

pious." Here speaks the "natural man," the Adam whose blood runs in our veins. Which of us does not blush to think how often we have shunned the company of the wise and the good because their moral purity shamed us?

¶ I can think of no more telling instance of the evasion of spiritual influence than one that is to be found in the incomparable pages of the great master of Greek philosophic thought. Twenty-three centuries ago there was no more brilliant figure in Athenian society than Alcibiades, soldier, statesman, and leader of fashion—the most daring, the most versatile, the most unprincipled of men. Well, Plato has put him, as it were, into the confessional. And this is what he represents him as saying of the effect produced on his mind by the character and teaching of Socrates. After bearing his personal witness to the strange and almost magical power over the heart of the words of the great Athenian master, he goes on to say, "No one would imagine that I could ever feel shame before any one, but before him I do stand rebuked. For when I hear him my heart throbs, and tears gush from my eyes. For he compels me to confess that, in intriguing for place and power, I am neglecting my real self, and all is ill within me. I cannot deny that I ought to do what he bids me, but I go away, and other influences prevail over me. Therefore, I shut my ears and run away from him like a slave, and whenever I see him shame takes possession of me. So I am in a strait betwixt two. Often I feel that I should be glad if he were no longer in the land of the living. Yet, if anything should happen to him, I know full well that I should be the more deeply grieved."[1]

3. A third way of attempting to hide from God—and it is perhaps the most evasive of all—is by *flattering ourselves that we are seeking His face.* Even religion may be so perverted as to become a deadening influence when we identify it with opinions, or party views, or zeal for dogma, or external things like ceremonies, or forms of worship, or matters of Church order and discipline. How many among us live and move in these surface questions, while shrinking from the deeper problems of what we are to think of God, and how we are to school ourselves to learn what is His will, and how we are to do it. Yes, it is quite as easy to hide from God among the pillars of the sanctuary as among the trees of the garden. Multiplied services, religious discussion,

[1] J. W. Shepard.

the manifold business of religious societies, may usurp the place of religious worship, and the care for these things may leave scanty room for the inward communing of the soul with God. Experience seems to show that the use of inferior ways of calling forth religious earnestness tends to make us indisposed to centre our faith on God's own revelation of Himself in His Son.

iii. They hid themselves amongst the Trees of the Garden.

Adam and his wife hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden. What are the trees one hides among?

1. One of the trees behind which we hide ourselves is the tree of *Knowledge*. "Ye shall be as gods," said Satan, "knowing." That "knowledge puffeth up" was known to Satan before it was stated by Paul. Knowledge is the fruit of the tree that stood in the very midst of the garden; but knowledge is accompanied by its shadow in the shape of a consciousness of knowledge; and consciousness of knowledge is on the negative side of know-nothing. One single electric light extinguishes the stars, and the shining of the low-lying moon snuffs out all the constellations of the firmament. The garden of the Lord grows up at length into such prodigality of leaf and flower as to conceal the Lord of the garden.

2. Another tree behind which the face of the Lord becomes hidden from us is that of *Wealth*. The tree of wealth, like the tree of knowledge, has its best rooting in the soil of paradise. We should no sooner think of speaking a disparaging word of money than we should of knowledge. But as knowledge becomes conscious of itself and so loses consciousness of God, so wealth is absorbed in itself and forgets God. The sun lifts the mist that befogs the sun. It is not easy to become very learned without getting lost in the world of our own erudition. It is not easy to become very rich without becoming lost in the world of our acquisition.

3. Another tree in God's garden is the tree of *Respectability*. More evidently, perhaps, than either of the others, it is the outcome of heavenly soil. The Gospel has always displayed a surpassing power in diffusing ideals of excellent behaviour, in

grappling with the coarser lusts of men, and taming them into habits of regularity and propriety. At the same time, when a man, by the impact of the truth, or by the pressure of sentiment, or by the fear of consequences, but without having been vitally renewed, has had just enough outward effect produced upon him to start in him an incipient and callow sense of goodness, such a man is of the very toughest material with which the Gospel has to contend. Such a little streak of conscious excellence when exposed to the convicting truth of God's Word, or power of God's Spirit, like a glittering rod pushed up into the electricity will convey off in silent serenity the most terrific bolt out of the sky that can be hurled against it. Dread respectability more than original sin.

In the ancient orderly places, with a blank and orderly mind,
We sit in our green walled gardens and our corn and oil increase;
Sunset nor dawn can wake us, for the face of the heavens is kind;
We light our taper at even and call our comfort peace.

Peaceful our clear horizon, calm as our sheltered days
Are the lilied meadows we dwell in, the decent highways we tread.
Duly we make our offerings, but we know not the God we praise,
For He is the God of the living, but we, His children, are dead.

I will arise and get me beyond this country of dreams,
Where all is ancient and ordered and hoar with the frost of years,
To the land where loftier mountains cradle their wilder streams,
And the fruitful earth is blessed with more bountiful smiles and tears,—

There in the home of the lightnings, where the fear of the Lord is set free,
Where the thunderous midnights fade to the turquoise magic of morn,
The days of man are a vapour, blown from a shoreless sea,
A little cloud before sunrise, a cry in the void forlorn—

I am weary of men and cities and the service of little things,
Where the flamelike glories of life are shrunk to a candle's ray.
Smite me, my God, with Thy presence, blind my eyes with Thy wings,
In the heart of Thy virgin earth show me Thy secret way![1]

III.

The Reconciliation.

1. The first step towards reconciliation is taken, not by the creature, but by the Creator. It is not man who first seeks God and cries out, "O my Maker, my Father, where art Thou?" but it is the great God and Father who tenderly inquires after His erring child. Christ's words, "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you," have an immediate reference to His followers, but they have also a general application to the race. Bede compares Christ's priority in choosing His disciples to God's priority in loving us. "We love, because he first loved us." Our love is a response to the appeal of His infinite, unmerited, and spontaneous love. He first loved us. When He made man, He did not leave him as a manufacturer might an article, without any concern respecting the future. Archbishop Trench says, "The clockmaker makes his clock and leaves it; the shipbuilder builds and launches the ship, which others navigate; but the world is no curious piece of mechanism which its Maker constructs and then dismisses from His hands." "And the Lord God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou?"

I have not sought Thee, I have not found Thee,
I have not thirsted for Thee:
And now cold billows of death surround me,
Buffeting billows of death astound me,—
Wilt Thou look upon, wilt Thou see
Thy perishing me?

Yea, I have sought thee, yea, I have found thee,
Yea, I have thirsted for thee,
Yea, long ago with love's bands I bound thee:
Now the Everlasting Arms surround thee,—
Through death's darkness I look and see
And clasp thee to Me.[2]

[1] John Buchan. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

2. What does God's question contain? The question is, Where art thou?

(1) It contains the suggestion that the man is *lost*. Until we have lost a thing we need not inquire about it; but when God said, "Where art thou?" it was the voice of a shepherd inquiring for his lost sheep; or better still, the cry of a loving parent asking for his child that has run away from him, "Where art thou?"

(2) It contains also the promise of *mercy*. It shows that God intended to have mercy upon man, or else He would have let him remain lost, and would not have said, "Where art thou?" Men do not inquire for what they do not value. There was a gospel sermon in those three divine words as they penetrated the dense parts of the thicket, and reached the tingling ears of the fugitives—"Where art thou?" Thy God is not willing to lose thee; He is come forth to seek thee, just as by and by He means to come forth in the person of His Son, not only to seek but to save that which now is lost.

3. And what is the effect of God's question?

(1) It rouses men to *a sense of their sinfulness*. Sin stultifies the conscience, it drugs the mind, so that after sin man is not capable of understanding his danger as he would have been without it. Sin is a poison which kills conscience painlessly by mortification. Men die by sin, as men die when frozen to death upon the Alps—they die in a sleep. One of the first works of grace in a man is to put aside this sleep, to startle him from his lethargy, to make him open his eyes and discover his danger.

¶ One of the holiest of the Church's saints, St. Bernard, was in the habit of constantly warning himself by the solemn query, "Bernarde, ad quid venisti?" "Bernard, for what purpose art thou here?"[1]

(2) It brings *repentance and confession*. The question was meant to convince of sin, and so to lead to a confession. Had Adam's heart been in a right state, he would have made a full confession of his sinfulness. It is easier to make a man start in his sleep than to make him rise and burn the loathsome bed on which he slumbered; and this is what the sinner must do, and what he will do if God be at work with him. He will wake up

[1] E. Morgan.

and find himself lost; conviction will give him the consciousness that he has destroyed himself, and then he will hate the sins he loved before, flee from his false refuges, and seek to find a lasting salvation where alone it can be found—in the blood of Christ.

¶ When Fletcher was a boy he lived in Switzerland, near the mighty mountains. He used to like to go out, when he was only seven years old, by himself, in the beautiful valleys and mountains, and think about God. He used to think that the mountains were like those where Elijah was. He had several brothers and sisters, and one day he was very cross, and quarrelled with them. When he went to bed he was told how very wrong it was. John did not say anything. When in bed, of course he could not sleep, and he did a very wise thing. He jumped out of bed, and he knelt down and asked God to forgive him. And Fletcher said, after he was a man, "Oh, that was a happy night! and that was the first time I ever tasted sweet peace."[1]

(3) But above everything else, and indeed as including everything else, it calls forth *a response to God's love*. "Where art thou?" is no doubt the question of the righteous *Judge* from whose wrathful eye no leafy tree can shadow. Adam must not imagine that his sin is a light matter in the estimation of Him who claims unqualified obedience. But it is at the same time the voice of the compassionate *Father*, who Himself goes forth in search of the lost one who has strayed from Him, and whose heart is no less penetrated with the misery into which His child has flung himself than with the guilt of his palpable error. It is, above all, the voice of the compassionate *Saviour*, who has it already in His heart to guide the sinner through the darker depths of judgment to the glorious heights of an eternal salvation. "Where art thou?" It is the first word of God's advent to the world, His salutation of peace before the utterance of the alarming prophecy, "I will put enmity"—a word which at the same time may be called the free act of eternal compassion, and whence still, after centuries, the echo recalls to us this comforting assurance, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

¶ The venerable Dr. Harry Rainy—in his old age, a picturesque and familiar figure in the streets of Glasgow with his Highland

[1] James Vaughan.

plaid, his snow-white hair and his furrowed face—died loved and honoured. In his last years he had a beautiful gentleness of spirit, and, regarding this, his son, Principal Rainy, in one of his delightful hours of reminiscence, told me an incident which, though it has a sacred privacy about it, I shall venture to repeat. Old Professor Rainy had one night a strange dream. He dreamt that he was holding converse with some August Personage, and gradually it became clear that This was none other than the Holy Spirit of God. The Divine Spirit seemed to be speaking of the means which would make His human auditor a holy man. God had used mercy and also discipline and yet it all had been insufficient. "The only thing," so the Transcendent Speaker seemed to say, "is that you should be brought to realize more clearly *how much God loves you.*" And from that time—"you may make of it what you will," said the Principal—his father had a peace and joy he never had before.[1]

[1] P. C. Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, i. 305.

THE CONFLICT OF THE AGES.

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THE CONFLICT OF THE AGES.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.—Gen. iii. 15.

1. THIS passage is known as the Protevangelium or earliest Gospel. It has obtained this name because of the promise contained in the words, "It shall bruise thy head." The meaning of the words in the original is a little uncertain, but if we take the translation of the Authorized and Revised Versions we have the metaphor of a man crushing a serpent with his foot and a serpent fastening its teeth in a man's heel. The crushing of the head is more than the biting of the heel; and thus is found in the passage the good news of God that Christ will trample Satan under foot and gain a complete victory over him, although He Himself may be wounded in the struggle.

2. The merely literal explanation of the verse clearly does not exhaust its meaning. There is something more in the words than a declaration that the human race will always view with feelings of instinctive aversion the serpent race. There is something more than a prediction that mankind will be able to assert superiority over this reptile foe among the beasts of the field. We need not doubt that, whichever of the alternative renderings of the verb be preferred, the underlying thought is that of a spiritual conflict between the race of man and the influences of temptation, between humanity with its gift of choice and the Principle of Evil which ever suggests the satisfaction of the lower desires. But, in addition to this main thought, a twofold encouragement is given to nerve man for the fray. He is endowed with capacities enabling him, if he will use them, to inflict a deadly blow upon the adversary. He stands erect, he is made in the image of God. Furthermore, the promise of ultimate victory is assured to him. How it is to be effected is not explained

in the context. Both Jewish and Christian interpretation have given to the promise the significance of a Messianic prediction. From the time of Irenæus (170 A.D.) "the seed of the woman" has been understood in the Christian Church as an allusion to a personal Messiah. Calvin, followed by the majority of the Reformers, explained the words in a more general sense, regarding "the seed of the woman" as the descendants of the first woman, but yet as those from among whom, according to the flesh, the Messiah should come.

3. The most prominent note in the passage is not that of final victory but of the long-continued struggle. Christ will gain the victory and the victory will be ours in Him; but before that, there is the conflict with the serpent which every man is expected to take his part in. It is a conflict that is to be carried on throughout all the ages until Christ comes, and even after Christ has come and won the victory the conflict continues. Every man upon this earth must face temptation, and win his battle. The difference is that, whereas before Christ came all that man had to sustain him in the conflict was the promise of victory through a coming conqueror, in Christ the promise has been turned into a fact, and in order to gain the victory a man has now only to identify himself with Christ by faith.

4. The Protevangelium lays down a great ethical principle. There is to be a continual spiritual struggle between man and the manifold temptations by which he is beset. Evil promptings and suggestions are ever assailing the sons of men; and they must be ever exerting themselves to repel them. It is of course true that the great and crowning defeat of man's spiritual adversary was accomplished by Him who was in a special sense the "seed" of the woman, the representative of humanity, who overcame once and for all the power of the Evil One. But the terms of the verse are perfectly general; and it must not be interpreted so as to exclude those minor, though in their own sphere not less real, triumphs by which in all ages individuals have resisted the suggestions of sin and proved themselves superior to the power of evil. It is a prolonged and continuous conflict which the verse contemplates, though one in which the

law and aim of humanity is to be to resist, and if possible to slay, the serpent which symbolizes the power of temptation.

¶ "I have a theory," says Hubert Bland in his volume of essays entitled, *With the Eyes of a Man*—"I have a theory that the nation which shortens its weapons wins its battles." I am not clear as to how that theory would work out in the sphere of lower warfare; although even there the practice of long range artillery must be pressed home at the point of the bayonet if victory is to be secured. But in the sphere of the higher warfare it is certainly true; if you want to win you must shorten your weapons; you must look your enemy in the white of his eyes; you must come to close grips with him.[1]

> And evermore we sought the fight, but still
> Some pale enchantment clouded all our will,
> So that we faltered; even when the foe
> Lay, at our sudden onset, crushed and low,
> As a flame dies, so passed our wrath away—
> And fatal to us was the battle-day.
>
> Yet we went willingly, for in our ears
> With shrill reiteration, the blind years
> Taunted us with our dreams—our dreams more vain
> Than on bare hills the fruitless fall of rain;
> Vain as the unaccomplished buds of spring
> Which fade and fall, and know no blossoming.
>
> Wherefore we, being weary of the days
> Which dumbly passed and left no word of praise,
> And ever as the good years waned to less,
> Growing more weary of life's barrenness,
> Strove with those dreams which bound our spirits fast,
> Lest even death should prove a dream at last.
>
> So evermore we fought—and always fell;
> Yet was there no man strong enough to quell
> Our passionate, sad life of love and hate;
> Tireless were we and foes insatiate.
> Though one should slay us—weaponless and dim
> We bade our dreams ride forth and conquer him.[2]

The subject, then, is the struggle of man with temptation. It is represented as a conflict between the seed of the woman, for every man must take his part in it, and the seed of the serpent,

[1] E. W. Lewis. [2] Margaret Sackville.

for the struggle will be according to the circumstances of our own time and our own life. Let us look first at the origin of this conflict, next at the progress of it, and then at the end of it.

I.

The Origin of the Conflict.

i Its Beginning.

1. *Creation of Men and Angels.*—God made three different orders of creatures. The first we call Angels; the second Men; and the third includes the lower animals and all other created things. He created them all for obedience. But with a difference. The third order—the lower animals and all other lower things, whether living or dead—He created for obedience pure and simple; but angels and men He created for obedience through love. The beasts obey because they have no choice. The sun rises and sets with unvarying regularity, and we use it to point the moral of punctual obedience.

> It never comes a wink too soon,
> Nor brings too long a day.

But it has no credit for that. It simply cannot help it. It was made to obey, and it has no choice but unwavering obedience. Angels and men were made for obedience also, but not for mechanical obedience. They were made to obey through love. The sun was made to do God's bidding; angels and men were made to love the Lord with all their heart. Now love implies choice. There must be freedom. I cannot love if I cannot do else but love. I cannot love unless I am also free to hate. There must be freedom of choice. So angels and men were left free to choose good or evil, and it is recorded that some angels and all men chose evil.

2. *Fall of Angels and of Men.*—The fall of the angels is not fully related in Scripture, since it does not concern us to know its circumstances. We do not even know for certain what was the cause of it. Shakespeare makes Wolsey say—

> Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:
> By that sin fell the angels.

And we have accepted that view of it. But whatever was the cause, we know that some of the angels chose the evil and fell. Man chose the evil and fell also. The story of his Choice and Fall is told in this third chapter of Genesis. And the first point to notice about it is that it was brought about through the temptation of one of the fallen angels. The narrative in Genesis speaks of the serpent. And throughout the narrative the language is accommodated to the beast. But he would be a dull interpreter who saw no more in this story than an old serpent myth. We interpret Scripture by itself. And it is certain that in later Scripture it is freely recognized that the author of Eve's temptation was Satan, the first of the fallen angels. What does that mean? It means that when an angel falls, he falls more utterly than man. No one tempted the angels to their fall. They deliberately chose the evil of themselves. And so their fall was into evil—evil absolute. Henceforth the fallen angels are only evil in will and in purpose. And their work is to do evil continually. So the prince of the fallen angels comes, and, out of the evil that is in him, tempts man to his ruin.

3. *Redemption of Men, not of Angels.*—Thus both angels and men have fallen, but the difference in their fall is very great. First, men have not fallen into evil absolutely like the angels. Their moral darkness is still pierced with some rays of light. And, secondly, men may be redeemed from their evil; the fallen angels may not. For there is an organic unity among men. There is a human nature. And when men fall they fall together—it is *man* that falls, not men. There is no angel nature; for, are we not told that "they neither marry nor are given in marriage?" Each of the fallen angels fell by himself alone. Deliberately he chose the evil for himself. So, when he fell, he fell never to rise again. Robert Burns may say—

> Auld Nickie-ben,
> O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
> Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
> Still hae a stake:
> I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
> Ev'n for your sake!

But it is a purely human sentiment. There is no warrant for

such expectation or possibility in Scripture. The warrant is very plainly all the other way. But man falls that he may rise again. For there is a solidarity in man. One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. And if One will but come and take this human nature on Him, enter this flesh of sin and condemn sin in the flesh, then will the way be open to man to return to the love and obedience of his God. And He has come. And when He came "he took not hold of angels; but he took hold of the seed of Abraham" (Heb. ii. 16).

ii. Its Meaning.

Thus the great conflict began. Tempted by Satan, man fell, but not utterly or irrecoverably. He will henceforth keep up a continuous warfare with Satan. There will be enmity between Adam and Satan, and between their seed, from generation to generation, till One shall come to win the victory for man.

1. There is a gospel in the very strife itself. For to begin no battle is to leave the victory with the Serpent. To open no world-wide conflict is to leave the world to the Prince of the world. To put no enmity between the seed of the Serpent and the seed of the Woman is to see no difference at last between them.

¶ When you send your boy to college or into the world, you do not ask for him a wholly easy life, no obstacles, a cordial, kindly reception from everybody. You do not expect to see him free from anxious doubts and troublesome experiences of soul, and cruel jarrings of his life against the institutions and the men whom he finds in the world. It would be very strange if they did not come to him if he is genuinely good and pure. "Marvel not," said Jesus Christ to His disciples, "if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."[1]

2. The enmity between man and sin has been the great impressive truth of human history. Mankind has never been reconciled with sin, never come to have such an understanding with it that the race everywhere has settled down and made up its mind to being wicked, and asked nothing better, and been at peace. That is the greatest fact by far, the deepest fact, the most pervasive fact, in all the world. Conscience, the restlessness

[1] Phillips Brooks.

that comes of self-reproach, the discontent that will not let the world be at peace with wrong-doing—it runs everywhere. No book of the remotest times, no country of the most isolated seas, no man of strongest character, no crisis of history so exceptional, but that in them all you find man out of peace because he is in sin, unable to reconcile himself with living wrong—the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It is the great fact of human existence.

¶ Hercules, the fabled deliverer of Greece, always wore on head and shoulders the skin of a lion killed in his first adventure, which Ruskin thus interprets: "Every man's Nemean lion lies in wait for him somewhere It is the first ugly and strong enemy that rises against us, all future victory depending on victory over that. Kill it; and through all the rest of life, what once was dreadful is your armour, and you are clothed with that conquest for every other, and helmed with its crest of fortitude for evermore. Alas, we have most of us to walk bareheaded."[1]

3. And is it not a blessed fact? Think how different it would all have been if this fact had not been true from the beginning, if man had been able to settle comfortably into sin and be content. Men read it as a curse, this first declaration of God in Genesis, after the Fall. Is it not rather a blessing? Man had met Satan. Then God said, "Since you have met him, the only thing which I can now do for you, the only salvation that I can give you, is that you never shall have peace with one another. You may submit to serve him, but the instinct of rebellion shall never die out in your heart." It was the only salvation left. It is the only salvation left now when a man has begun to sin, that God should perpetually forbid him to be at peace in sinning. It is what has saved earth from becoming hell long ago—this blessed decree of God that, however man and sin might live together, there should always be enmity between them, they should be natural foes for ever. No man has ever yet been bold enough, even in any mad dream of poetry, to picture the reconciliation of the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, man's perfect satisfaction in sin, as the consummation and perfect close of human history.

¶ There is an Indian fable that a swan came down to the shore one day, where a crane was feeding. This bird had never seen a swan before, and asked him where he came from. "I came

[1] Ruskin, *Queen of the Air*, § 173.

from heaven," said the swan. Said the crane, "I never heard of such a place. Where is it?" "Far away; far better than this place," said the swan. The old crane listened to the swan, and at last said, "Are there snails there?" The swan drew itself up with indignation. "Well," said the crane, "you can have your heaven then. I want snails."[1]

¶ There is an awful possibility of giving over prayer, or coming to think that the Lord's ear is heavy that He cannot hear, and His arm shortened that He cannot save. There is a terrible significance in this passage, which we quote from a recent book: "Old Mr. Westfield, a preacher of the Independent persuasion in a certain Yorkshire town, was discoursing one Sunday with his utmost eloquence on the power of prayer. He suddenly stopped, passed his hands slowly over his head—a favourite gesture—and said in dazed tones: 'I do not know, my friends, whether you ever tried praying; for my part, I gave it up long ago as a bad job.' The poor old gentleman never preached again. They spoke of the strange seizure that he had in the pulpit, and very cheerfully and kindly contributed to the pension which the authorities of the chapel allowed him. I knew him five-and-twenty years ago—a gentle old man addicted to botany, who talked of anything but spiritual experiences. I have often wondered with what sudden flash of insight he looked into his own soul that day, and saw himself bowing down silent before an empty shrine."[2]

¶ In the great Church of the Capuchins at Rome there is a famous picture, by Guido Reni, of the Archangel Michael triumphing over the Evil One. The picture represents the Archangel clad in bright armour and holding in his hand a drawn sword, with one foot planted upon the head of Satan, who in the form of a dragon or serpent grovels and writhes beneath him. A sense of victory, not unmingled with defiance, shines on the Archangel's face; while Satan's every feature is distorted with suffering and hatred. And as we look at the picture, we can hardly fail to see in it the image, the representation, so often depicted, so earnestly longed for, of the final victory of good over evil. What, however, to many at any rate, gives to this picture a peculiar interest is the famous criticism passed upon it in a well-known modern work of fiction, Hawthorne's *Transfiguration*. The Archangel—so it is there objected—has come out of the contest far too easily. His appearance and attitude give no idea of the death-struggle which always takes place before vice can be overcome by virtue. His sword should have been streaming with blood; his armour dented

[1] L. A. Banks, *The King's Stewards*, 281.
[2] W. R. Nicoll, *The Garden of Nuts*, 224.

and crushed; he should not have been placing his foot delicately upon his frustrate foe, but pressing it down hard as if his very life depended upon the result.[1]

O bird that fights the heavens, and is blown beyond the shore,
Would you leave your flight and danger for a cage, to fight no more?
No more the cold of winter, or the hunger of the snow,
Nor the winds that blow you backward from the path you wish to go?
Would you leave your world of passion for a home that knows no riot?
Would I change my vagrant longings for a heart more full of quiet?
No!—for all its dangers, there is joy in danger too:
On, bird, and fight your tempests, and this nomad heart with you.[2]

II.

The History of the Conflict.

It is a conflict which every man must enter. If any man refuses to engage in the struggle, he declares himself to be no man. The gospel that is in the words, "It shall bruise thy head," does not take away from any man the necessity of entering into this affray and facing this foe. The gospel gives the assurance of victory; it does not prevent the strife. It is impossible, therefore, to write the history of the conflict fully. All that can be done is, under the guidance of the Old Testament, to select outstanding events in it.

1. Eve seemed to think that it was to be a short struggle. When her first-born came she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." But Cain grew up to manhood, and Abel his brother; "and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." The hoped-for victor is man's first murderer.

2. Lamech thought he had found the Deliverer. "This same

[1] G. Milligan. [2] Dora Sigerson Shorter.

shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." And he called his son's name Noah. Now in the conflict Satan has so steadily won that it is needful to sweep man from off the face of the earth, and make, as it were, a new start. But Noah cannot save his brethren. He barely escapes with his own family. And the flood is only past when even Noah himself has suffered from the bite of the Serpent.

3. Men have got a new start, however. Will they cope with Satan now? Not so. Steadily again Satan wins. And the earth grows so corrupt that God chooses one man and takes him out of the surrounding abomination, to keep him apart and train him and his family for Himself and His great purpose. That man is Abraham. Not that God now leaves the rest of the human race to the unresisted will of Satan. In no place, and at no time, has God left Himself without witness. Or, as another apostle more personally puts it, He kept coming amongst men in the Person of the Word, and whenever any one was found willing to follow the Light, power was given to him to become a child of God. This choice of Abraham and his family is a new departure, that through him and his seed all the families of the earth may be blessed. Is this new departure successful? Does the family of Abraham now gain the victory over Satan, and gain it always? No; not even for themselves; still less for the rest of mankind. As the same evangelist has it, "He came unto *his own* and his own received him not." But God's purpose is not in vain, nor even thwarted for a moment. Man *will* be redeemed, and the redemption is delayed only that it may be to love and new obedience, the will to choose being still left free.

4. And now we can trace the gradual closing of the promise on a single Person. "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you." "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple." "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Meanwhile, the world is suffering more and more from the low cunning and bite of the serpent. Read that terrible yet true description of the morals of men which St. Paul gives us

in his Epistle to the Romans. Read also the scathing exposure in the Gospels of the irreligiousness of the religion of Israel, the hypocrisy and greed of the leaders and rulers of the people. Satan seems to have gained the victory along the whole line.

¶ It is the strength of the base element that is so dreadful in the serpent; it is the very omnipotence of the earth. . . . Watch it, when it moves slowly, with calm will and equal way—no contraction, no extension; one soundless, causeless march of sequent rings, and spectral procession of spotted dust. Startle it; —the winding stream will become a twisted arrow, the wave of poisoned life will lash through the grass like a cast lance. It scarcely breathes with its one lung; it is passive to the sun and shade, and is cold or hot like a stone; yet it can outclimb the monkey, outswim the fish, outleap the zebra, outwrestle the athlete, and crush the tiger. It is a divine hieroglyph of the demoniac power of the earth—of the entire earthly nature. As the bird is the clothed power of the air, so this is the clothed power of the dust; as the bird the symbol of the spirit of life, so this of the grasp and sting of death.[1]

When in my shadowy hours I pierce the hidden heart of hopes and fears,
They change into immortal joys or end in immemorial tears.
Moytura's battle still endures and in this human heart of mine
The golden sun powers with the might of demon darkness intertwine.

I think that every teardrop shed still flows from Balor's eye of doom,
And gazing on his ageless grief my heart is filled with ageless gloom:
I close my ever-weary eyes and in my bitter spirit brood
And am at one in vast despair with all the demon multitude.

But in the lightning flash of hope I feel the sun-god's fiery sling
Has smote the horror in the heart where clouds of demon glooms take wing,
I shake my heavy fears aside and seize the flaming sword of will
I am of Dana's race divine and know I am immortal still.[2]

[1] Ruskin, *Queen of the Air*, § 68. [2] A. E., *The Divine Vision*, 76.

III.

The End of the Conflict.

The victor comes in Jesus of Nazareth. "On the morrow John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus of Nazareth has come as man's representative and redeemer to atone for the sins of the world. But first, He is Jesus of Nazareth. He is a man. Before He begins His work of atonement, before He takes upon Him the redemption of the world, He must fight His own man's battle. To every man upon this earth that battle comes. It comes to Jesus also. Therefore before the public ministry begins, before He begins to heal the sick or raise the dead or preach the gospel to the poor, "the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

i. His Temptation as a Man.

This is the place of the Temptation in the Wilderness. Jesus is a man, and He must face the foe whom every man has to face. He must fight the battle which every man has to fight. And He must win. If He does not win, how can He atone for the sins of the world? If as a man He does not win His own man's battle, why, then, He has His own sins to reckon with, and how can He even come forward as the Redeemer of the race? Jesus must fight and Jesus must win, just as we all have to fight, but not one of us has won. That is the place of the Temptation. And that is why the Temptation in the Wilderness is recorded. It is every man's Temptation. It may be spread over our life; it could not have been spread over the life of Jesus, otherwise He could not have begun His atonement till His life was at an end; but it is the same temptation that comes to every man. It is the temptation that came to Eve. Point for point the temptations of Eve and the temptations of Jesus correspond. Eve's temptations were three; so were the temptations of Jesus. Eve's temptations assailed the body, the mind, and the spirit; so did the temptations of Jesus.

1. *The First Temptation.*—The first temptation was a bodily temptation. She "saw that the tree was good for food." "If

thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." There is the difference, certainly, that Eve was not hungry, while Jesus was. The sin of Eve was the greater that she sinned not through the cravings of hunger, but merely through the longing for forbidden, or it might be daintier, food. But though the temptation was more intense for Jesus, it did not differ from Eve's essentially. It was the desire for food. It was the longing to satisfy a bodily appetite. And it does not matter how imperious that appetite may be, it is not to be satisfied unlawfully. Eve saw that she had the opportunity of satisfying it, Jesus saw that He had the power. Eve was tempted to satisfy it by using an opportunity which God had not given her, Jesus by using a power which had been given Him for another purpose. It does not matter essentially whether it is to avoid starvation or merely for greater luxury, we sin with Eve if we seize an opportunity or take advantage of our position to do that for our body or outward estate which God has commanded us not to do.

2. *The Second Temptation.*—The second temptation was to the mind. "And that it was a delight to the eyes"—thus the temptation came to Eve. He "showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time"—thus it came to Jesus. Now the temptation to the mind does not come to every one. It does not come to those who are absorbed in the things of the body. The three temptations came to Eve because Eve is typical of the whole human race. And the three temptations came to Jesus, because He is typical also, and because He resisted them all. The temptation to the mind is higher; it is a nobler temptation than the temptation to the body. There are those to whom the fragrance or beauty of the apple makes irresistible appeal, who would never be driven to do wrong merely in order to have it to eat. It is a subtler temptation also. We are willing to starve that we may hear good music or give ourselves a scientific education. And we cannot perceive that we are falling before a temptation. But music or science may be pursued for purely selfish ends. In their pursuit, too, some nearer duty may be neglected. And the fall is often obvious enough: a doubtful companionship, such as music sometimes

introduces us to; or a denial of God such as science sometimes leads us to.

But the temptation to Jesus was nobler, we do not doubt, and more subtle than the temptation to the mind has ever been to any other man. He saw the kingdoms of the world at a glance, and the glory of them. He was offered them as His own. Now, He desired to have the kingdoms of the world as His own. All the difference seemed to be that the Devil offered them at once without the agony of winning them—the agony to Him or to us. He was offered them without the agony to Himself. Some think that He did not know yet what that agony was. He did not know that He was to be despised and rejected of men. He did not know that He was to lose the sense of the Father's well-pleasing. He did not know what the Garden was to be or what the Cross. They say so. But how can they tell? One thing is sure. He knew enough to make this a keen temptation.

But He was also offered the kingdoms of the world without the agony to us. That temptation was yet more terrible. For when the Cross was past, the agony to us was but beginning. And He felt our agony more keenly than He felt His own. What a long-drawn agony it has been. Two thousand years of woe! and still the redemption is not complete. To be offered the homage of the human heart, to be offered its love—such love as it would have been where there was no choice left—to end the poverty and the sickness and the blindness and the leprosy and the death, not by an occasional laying on of the hands in a Galilean village, but in one world-embracing word of healing; to end the sin without waiting for the slow movements of conscience and the slow dawnings of faith—it was a sore temptation. But it must not be. To deliver from the consequence of sin without the sorrow for it, to accept the homage of the heart of man without its free choice of love, is to leave the Serpent master still. The world is very fair to look upon as He sees it in a moment of time from that mountain-top; but it cannot be His until He has suffered for it, and until it has suffered with Him.

3. *The Third Temptation.*—The third temptation was a

temptation to the spirit. Eve saw "that the tree was to be desired to make one wise." Jesus was invited to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, trusting in God and in the promise that no harm should befall Him. The "wisdom" which Eve was promised was spiritual wisdom. It was the wisdom of God. "Ye shall be as gods," said the Serpent, "knowing good and evil." And this wisdom became hers when she had eaten. "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." It was such wisdom as God has. And God is a Spirit. It was spiritual wisdom. Man is both spiritual and material. As a spiritual being he has certain spiritual experiences. But as long as the spirit is in touch with the body its experiences are limited in their range. God is a Spirit, and His experience knows no bounds. When man attempts to pass the bounds of human experience and enter the experience of God, he sins.

Eve was so tempted and fell. Jesus also was so tempted, but He resisted the temptation. As God He can throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple with impunity, just as He can walk upon the water. And the Devil reminds Him that He is God. But this is His temptation as a man. As a man He cannot, as a man He has no right, to tempt God by casting Himself down. To Eve and to Jesus it was the temptation to an enlargement of experience beyond that which is given to man. And it lay, as it always does, in the direction of the knowledge of evil. There are those who, like Eve, still enter into evil not from the mere love of evil or the mere spirit of rebellion, but in order to taste that which they have not tasted yet. They wish to know "what it is like." There are men and women who can trace their drunkard's lifelong misery to this very source.

To Eve the sharpness of the temptation lay in the promise of larger spiritual experiences. Let us not say it was a vulgar curiosity. The promise was that she would be as God, that she would know what God knows. Perhaps she even felt that it would bring her into closer sympathy with God, the sympathy of a larger common experience. To Jesus this also was the sharpness of the temptation. He was God, but He was being tempted as a man. It was not merely, as in the first temptation,

that He was invited to use His power as Redeemer for His own human advantage. It was that He was invited to enter into the experience of God, to enter into the fulness of knowledge which belongs to God, to prove Himself, and to feel in perfect sympathy with the whole range of experience of the Father. It seemed like trust: it would have been presumption. We sometimes enter into temptation saying that we will trust God to deliver us. No one ever yet entered into temptation, unsent by God, and came forth scathless.

¶ Let us not undervalue the blessing which would come to us if Jesus Christ were simply one of us, setting forth with marvellous vividness the universal conflict of the world, the perpetual strife of man with evil. Surely that strife becomes a different thing for each of us, when out of our own little skirmish in some corner of the field, we look up and see the Man of men doing just the same work on the hilltop where the battle rages thickest. The schoolboy tempted to tell a lie, the man fighting with his lusts, the soldier struggling with cowardice, the statesman with corruption, the poor creature fettered by the thousand little pin-pricks of a hostile world—they all find the dignity of their several battles asserted, find that they are not unnatural, but natural, find that they are not in themselves wicked but glorious, when they see that the Highest, entering into their lot, manifested the eternal enmity between the seed of the serpent and our common humanity at its fiercest and bitterest.[1]

When gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark and friends are few,
On Him I lean, who not in vain
Experienced every human pain;
He sees my wants, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears.

If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom's narrow way;
To fly the good I would pursue,
Or do the sin I would not do;
Still He, who felt temptation's power,
Shall guard me in that dangerous hour.

If wounded love my bosom swell,
Deceived by those I prized too well;

[1] Phillips Brooks.

He shall His pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer woe;
At once betrayed, denied, or fled,
By those who shared His daily bread.

If vexing thoughts within me rise,
And, sore dismayed, my spirit dies;
Still He, who once vouchsafed to bear
The sickening anguish of despair,
Shall sweetly soothe, shall gently dry,
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye.

When sorrowing o'er some stone I bend,
Which covers what was once a friend,
And from his voice, his hand, his smile,
Divides me for a little while;
Thou, Saviour, mark'st the tears I shed,
For Thou didst weep o'er Lazarus dead!

And O! when I have safely past
Through every conflict but the last;
Still, still unchanging, watch beside
My painful bed, for Thou hast died!
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tear away.[1]

ii. His Work of Redemption.

Jesus was tempted of the Devil and resisted all the temptations. What it cost Him we cannot tell. We know it cost Him much. Angels came and ministered unto Him. He needed their ministrations. But He won His battle. No one could convict Him of sin. He is ready now to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

1. *His Works.*—When He begins His work of Redemption He can use His powers as the Son of God. The Devil's temptation, "If thou art the Son of God," is a temptation no longer. He begins His works of wonder. He heals the sick; He preaches the gospel to the poor; He accepts the cup and drinks it; He cries, "It is finished."

[1] Robert Grant.

2. *Son of Man.*—While the Temptation in the Wilderness was the temptation of a man, the atonement for sin was the atonement of the Son of Man, man's representative; the atonement of the race in Him. This is the essential thing in the Cross. He took hold of our nature; in our nature He suffered and died. Our nature suffered and died in Him. This is the essential thing, that He made the atonement as Man, that man made the atonement when He made it. After the Temptation in the Wilderness the Devil left Him for a season. When he came back he did not come back to a man. He came back to the race of man, represented and gathered into one in Christ. He came back not to seek to throw one human being as he had thrown so many human beings before. He came to fight for his kingdom and his power.

3. *Victory.*—It did seem as if the Devil had won this time. As the fight closed in, Jesus Himself said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The Devil had the whole world on his side in the struggle. The religious leaders were especially active. And the end came—death and darkness. It did seem as if the Devil had won this time, and this was the greater battle to win. But "except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone." Without death Jesus was sinless. In death He gathered many to His sinlessness. Death and the Devil got hold of Him but lost their hold of us. It was the Devil's greatest triumph. It was his greatest defeat.

4. *Faith in the Victor.*—One thing remains. We must accept Him. The kingdom of heaven is open, but it is open to all *believers.* He could not have this fair world without the agony; we cannot have Him without it. For it is love that is wanted. Nothing is wanted but love. It is the love of the heart that makes Paradise. And love must be free. There is no compulsion. Sin must be felt and repented of; a Saviour must be seen and made welcome. By faith we must become one with Him as He has become one with us.

¶ Every earnest man grows to two strong convictions: one, of the victory to which a life may come; the other of the obstacles and wounds which it must surely encounter in coming there. Alas for him who gains only one of these convictions

Alas for him who learns only confidence in the result, and never catches sight of all that must come in between—the pains and blows and disappointments! How many times he will sink down and lose his hope! How many times some wayside cross will seem to be the end of everything to him! Alas also for him who only feels the wounds and sees no victory ahead! How often life will seem to him not worth the living! There are multitudes of men of this last sort; men with too much seriousness and perception to say that the world is easy, too clear-sighted not to see its obstacles, too pure not to be wounded and offended by its wickedness, but with no faith large enough to look beyond and see the end; men with the wounded heel that hinders and disables them, but with no strength to set the wounded foot upon the head of the serpent and to claim their triumph.[1]

¶ I do not doubt that many of you noted, as I did, the description given in the newspaper dispatches of the visit of Theodore Roosevelt to the tomb of Napoleon, and you perhaps noted how he took up the sword which the great warrior carried in the battle of Austerlitz, and waved it about his head and examined its edge, and held it aloft, seeming in the meantime to be profoundly impressed. And we may well imagine and believe that the hero of San Juan Hill was stirred in every drop of his soldierly blood as he stood on that historic spot with that famous sword gripped in his right hand. But if we could gather together all the famous swords kept in all the capitals of the world, in memory of princes and warriors and heroes who have carried them on historic battlefields, they would be insignificant in comparison to that "sword of the Spirit," of which Paul speaks in his letter to the Ephesians—a sword by which millions of humble men and women, and even boys and girls, have put to flight the alien armies of hell and maintained their integrity against odds as the faithful children of God.[2]

The far winds brought me tidings of him—one
  Who fought alone, a champion unafraid,
Hurt in the desperate warring, faint, fordone;
  I loved him, and I prayed.

The far winds told the turning of the strife;
  Into his deeds there crept a strange new fire.
Unconquerable, the glory of his life
  Fulfilled my soul's desire.

[1] Phillips Brooks.

[2] L. A. Banks, *The World's Childhood*, 344.

God knows what mighty bond invisible
  Gave my dream power, wrought answer to my prayer;
God knows in what far world our souls shall tell
  Of triumph that we share.

I war alone; I shall not see his face,
  But I shall strive more gladly in the sun,
More bravely in the shadow, for this grace:
  "He fought his fight, and won."

The Tree of Life.

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THE TREE OF LIFE.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.—Gen. iii. 24.

1. THE recent discussions about, and criticisms of, the first chapters of the Book of Genesis have left a certain vague and uncomfortable feeling in the minds of many men. Not a few people, probably, think in a dim sort of way that geology, or something else, has made those chapters of very doubtful worth. The worst part of this feeling is that it robs the early story of our race of the spiritual power that it possesses. Apart from the question of its historic character, the account of man's origin which is given in Genesis is profoundly true to man's spiritual experience, and its imagery is representative of perpetual and universal truth.

2. Let us briefly recall the story. In the garden where God first placed man, the scene of his earliest experiences, it is said that God, his Creator, planted two trees. There are many others, but these two are noticeable and distinct. One of them is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the other is the Tree of Life. There they stand side by side, both beautiful, both tempting. But on one of them—the most tempting—a prohibition is laid. Of the tree of knowledge man must not taste. But man rebels, wilfully, independently, against God's word, and does eat of this tree. The consequence is that he is not allowed to eat of the other tree. He is driven out of the garden where it stands, and is forbidden to return; and his return is made impossible by "Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

3. Thus begins the long career of humanity. Man is forced to undertake the work and drudgery of living. The centuries,

laden with wars and pains and hopes and fears and disappointments and successes, start on their slow procession. But no more is heard of the tree of life. It is not mentioned again in the course of the Bible. It is left behind the closed gate and the flaming sword, until we are surprised, at the extreme other end of the Bible, the New Testament, to see it suddenly reappear. In the Book of Revelation, where the promises of the world's final glory are gathered, this promise stands among the brightest: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." The long-lost tree is not lost after all. God has only been keeping it out of sight; and at last He brings man to it, and invites him to eat. "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Into [illegible] glory the angels of God are to bring His people at the last.

¶ It is interesting, I think, to turn to the New Testament and see how, when Jesus Christ came, the story which He had to tell of man's condition and prospects was just the same with this old story of the tree of Genesis. Take the parable of the Prodigal Son —how different it is! how quiet and domestic and familiar! how homely in its quaint details! But if you look at it, you will see that the meaning is the same. There, too, there is a first native possibility, the place in the father's house to which the boy was born. There, too, that possibility ceases to be actual because of the wilfulness of him to whom it was offered. "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me"; it is exactly Adam and Eve over again. There, too, the possibility is not destroyed, but stands waiting, out of sight of the wanderer, but always expecting his return; the father's house from which the son goes out, and which stands with its door open when long afterwards he comes struggling back. There, too, the instant that submission is complete—"I will arise and go to my father"—the lost possibility is found again, for, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." The story of the tree of life and the story of the prodigal son are the same story. Drawn with such different touch, coloured in such different hues, they set before us still the same picture of the life of man.[1]

[1] Phillips Brooks.

Therefore in sight of man bereft
The happy garden still was left,
The fiery sword that guarded show'd it too,
Turning all ways, the world to teach,
That though as yet beyond our reach,
Still in its place the tree of life and glory grew.[1]

Let us consider—

I. The Loss of the Tree of Life.
II. The Guardians of the Tree of Life.
III. The Recovery of the Tree of Life.

I.

The Loss of the Tree of Life.

1. The tree of life signifies the fulness of human existence —that complete exercise of every power, that roundness and perfectness of being which was in God's mind when He made man in His own image. It represents not mere endurance, not merely an existence which is going to last for ever. It represents quality more than quantity, or quantity only as it is the result of quality. To eat of the tree of life is to enter into and occupy the fulness of human existence, to enjoy and exercise a life absolute and perfect, to live in the full completeness of our powers. We can feel how this luxuriousness and fulness are naturally embodied under the figure of a tree. In many myths of many races, the tree has seemed the fittest symbol of the life of man; and the tree perfect in God's garden is the truest picture of man's whole nature complete under His care.

2. Man was banished from the Garden of Eden. The tree of life which was in the midst of the Garden of Eden was the one thing that was now going to be safeguarded by the presence of the Cherubim and by the flaming sword. We must not suppose that there was anything undesirable now in the tree of life as such—that is to say, we must not imagine that there was a change in the character of its value. Sometimes we are inclined to read the story as though it meant that it was no longer desirable that man should take of the tree of life. What the narrative really

[1] John Keble, *The Christian Year*, Sexagesima Sunday.

does mean is that it was no longer desirable that man should take of the tree of life on the old conditions. The old conditions were conditions of ease.

¶ That which we have is never the tree of life to us. The tree of life is always the thing which we must reach forward to attain; and if our condition of life is that we are satisfied to take these fruits which grow upon the tree of life, what is according to the ordinary conventional acceptation the best thing, the correct thing, the most important thing, let us not be satisfied with that. Let us look over once more where the protecting rampart of fire and of sword stands between us and some more desirable object.[1]

> Old man, old man, God never closed a door
> Unless one opened. I am desolate,
> For a most sad resolve wakes in my heart;
> But always I have faith. Old men and women
> Be silent; He does not forsake the world,
> But stands before it modelling in the clay
> And moulding there His image. Age by age
> The clay wars with His fingers and pleads hard
> For its old heavy, dull, and shapeless ease.[2]

3. "He drove out the man" means that the pleasantness, and ease, and safety, of the Garden were taken from him: that he had forfeited, and was made to feel he had forfeited, the delightful sense of a constant nearness to God, and of unrestrained intercourse with Him; that he had to go out into the comparative desolation of the common unblessed world to fight for his own hand, and to make the best he could of things. Well, of course everybody knows that this was, in a very true sense, the best thing that could have happened to him, since he fell. Mankind has risen slowly to its present state of power and progress just because it had to fight its way up against a multitude of difficulties and obstacles, which gradually called out and educated its powers and faculties of body and of mind. The struggle with wild beasts; the struggle with harsh climates and unkindly soils; the struggle with what seemed the inveterate hostility, or the incurable caprice, of nature: these and such-like things have made man what he is in position and resource. Go the world

[1] W. Boyd Carpenter. [2] W. B. Yeats.

over, and you will find that exactly those races which might seem to have been most effectually "driven out," and left furthest off from the earthly paradise, have been *the* races which have attained the highest civilization.

¶ It is remarkable that in so many great wars it is the defeated who have won. The people who were left worst at the end of the war were generally the people who were left best at the end of the whole business. For instance, the Crusades ended in the defeat of the Christians. But they did not end in the decline of the Christians; they ended in the decline of the Saracens. That huge prophetic wave of Moslem power which had hung in the very heavens above the towns of Christendom: that wave was broken, and never came on again. The Crusades had saved Paris in the act of losing Jerusalem. The same applies to that epic of Republican war in the eighteenth century to which we Liberals owe our political creed. The French Revolution ended in defeat; the kings came back across a carpet of dead at Waterloo. The Revolution had lost its last battle, but it had gained its first object. It had cut a chasm. The world has never been the same since.[1]

4. What was the occasion of the expulsion? The blessing of the Divine Presence was conditional upon obedience to the Divine will. Paradise was forfeited by the preference of selfish appetites over the command of God. The expulsion from Paradise was the inevitable consequence of sin; the desire of man for the lower life was granted. He who asserted his own against the Divine will had no place in the Paradise of God.

Take the meanest and most sordid face that passes you, the face most brutalized by vice, most pinched and strained by business;—that man has his tree of life, his own separate possibility of being, luxuriant and vital, fresh, free, original. "How terribly he has missed it," you say. Indeed he has. A poor, misguided thing he is, as wretched as poor Adam when he had been driven from his tree of life, and stood naked and shivering outside the Garden, with the beasts that used to be his subjects snarling at him, and the ground beginning to mock him with its thorns and thistles. That poor man evidently has been cast out of his garden, and has lost his tree of life. And is it not evident enough how he lost it? Must it not have been that he

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles*.

was wilful? Must it not have been that, at the very beginning, he had no idea but for himself, no notion of living in obedience to God?

¶ What makes the scholar's life a failure? What makes him sigh when at last the books grow dim before his eyes, and the treacherous memory begins to break and lose the treasures it has held? He has been studying for himself, wilfully, not humbly, taking the fruit from the tree of knowledge. What makes the workman turn into a machine? What makes us feel so often, the more his special skill develops, that he is growing less and not more a man? What shuts the merchant up to his drudgery, making it absolutely ridiculous and blasphemous to say of him, as we watch the way he lives and the things he does from the time he rises till the time he goes to bed, "That is what God made that man for"? What makes every one of us sigh when we think what we might have been? Why is every one of us missing his highest? Why are we all shut out from our trees of life? There is one word, one universal word, that tells the sad story for us all. It is selfishness—selfishness from the beginning. If we had not been selfish, if we had lived for God from the beginning, if we had been consecrated, we know it would have been different; we should have had our Eden inside and not outside; we should have eaten in God's due time of our tree of life; and have come to what He made us for,—our fullest and our best life.[1]

II.

The Guardians of the Tree of Life.

Adam and Eve being driven out from the tree of life, who were the guards that stood to hinder their return? Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way.

i. The Cherubim.

1. The essential idea of the Cherubim seems to have been that they represented the forces of nature as the servants of God. "The Lord sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet," says David, and in another psalm, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly." These forces of nature, these things of the world about us, these objects and circumstances, made by God

[1] Phillips Brooks.

to assist in the pleasure and culture of mankind,—these same things are they which, when man is rebellious and selfish, stand between him and his fullest life. Those objects and circumstances which, if a man were docile and humble, and lived his life with and under God, would all be developing and perfecting him, making him stronger, making him happier,—all those things, just as soon as a man cuts himself off from God and insists on getting knowledge and doing work by himself, become his enemies. They hinder him instead of helping him; they are always pulling him down instead of lifting him up; making him a worse and smaller instead of a better and larger man.

2. In the symbolism of Scripture the Cherubim are everywhere the "supporters" of the Divine Majesty. For this reason they are admitted into the Tabernacle and the Temple in the very teeth of the second commandment; two veritable and undeniable "graven images" (of Cherubim) spread their wings over the Mercy Seat on which the Divine Glory was believed to appear. For this reason the Chariot of God in Ezekiel is composed of Cherubim, and in the Apocalypse the same symbolic beings (under the name of "the four living creatures") are seen "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne." They belong in some way to the Presence of God: they mean that He is there, very really and truly. Secondly, they represent also nature in her manifold forms and types. The graven images in Tabernacle and Temple were evidently composite creature-forms, something like those so common in Assyria. They resemble no one type of creature life, but several blended together so as to suggest them all. The Cherubim of Ezekiel's vision and the living creatures of the Apocalypse are essentially the same. The sin and degradation of the old world was creature-worship; therefore, in the sacred writings, Jewish or Christian, the symbolic representatives of *all* nature, in all her types and kinds, are made the supporters of *His* Throne who is eternally above nature, who manifests Himself for ever through nature. There is a tremendous truth in that; the only right place, the only safe place, for the Cherubim—for nature—for natural science—is in immediate connection with, in immediate subordination to, the One living and true God. It is the place of honour; it is the place of safety.

Bring the Cherubim out of the Temple and away from God; instantly they become monuments of idolatry, which the servants of the Most High must break and burn. Let them remain *His* supporters and *His* Throne; *they* are glorified and *we* are safe.

3. The Cherubim at the entrance to forfeited and forbidden Paradise meant that God's presence was there, that God Himself barred the way: God who fulfils Himself in nature, who rules and reigns in and through the laws of nature. Is there any riddle there? Does it not explain itself? Is it not obviously true that natural law eternally forbids our getting into Paradise, and that we have no power to evade or to defy that law? People may be as lucky or as successful as you like; they may be (as we say) the spoilt children of fortune; they may have every advantage on their side; but they cannot make their way into the garden of delight. No happiness for man which has not its drawbacks, its penalties; at best, its tormenting fear of loss! That is not a pious platitude; it is an inexorable law of nature, with which most of us have made acquaintance to our cost—and those who have not, *will*. Nature itself bars our way to bliss, the bliss we cannot but desire: and nature stands for God.[1]

If you should meet with one who strays
  Beyond the walls of peace,
Who spends the passion of his days
  In dreams that never cease,
Oh, tell him that the outcast ways
    Find no release.

If you should look into his eyes,
  And see the shadow there
Of his dear City's towers and skies,
  Where once his heart lay bare,
Oh, tell him those who are most wise
    Their vision spare.

If you should see him turn and wait,
  Fast bound by his desire,
Beyond the walls disconsolate,
  In dreams that never tire,
Oh, tell him that the City gate
    Is barred by fire.

[1] Rayner Winterbotham.

No other torches shall divide
The road for his release,
Oh, tell him they stretch dark and wide,
Long roads that never cease—
If you should meet with one outside
The walls of peace.[1]

ii. The Flaming Sword.

There is something else, besides the Cherubim, that bars the way: something more subtle, more inexplicable, more versatile even, and even more formidable. "The flame of a sword which turned every way." See how the words themselves irresistibly suggest an allegory. Not "a flaming sword"; that was a poor prosaic watering down of the original; but "the flame of a sword." As though some magic sword "bathed in heaven," and wielded by some invisible angelic virtue, were leaving its scorch and radiance upon the yielding air as it played hither and thither with the velocity of lightning.

1. The "flame of a sword"; something "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword"; something "everywhere perceived, but nowhere dwelt upon," subtle, inscrutable, inexplicable, but meeting one at every turn, and hopelessly barring approach from any side—not by any solid obstacle, but by the sense of dread; dread of the unknown and awful. What does that flame of a sword turning every way stand for? Is it not the sense of guilt? the conscience of sin? which is so subtle and fleeting and intangible, and yet keeps a man out of the Paradise of peace and happiness as effectually as though he were shut up within prison bars.

¶ Try to get into Paradise! try to be perfectly calm, and happy, and at rest! try to return to the Garden where, in the cool of the day, you may hear the voice of God the Father speaking to you! to that primal state of which your heart whispers to you, when you were in His sight naked and yet unashamed. Forget for a moment the unsurmountable difficulties which nature has placed in your way—its bereavements, its limitations, its illusions—and you will be instantly aware of this subtler and more formidable foe, the lambent flame which plays around you and through you, more quick and incessant than the lightning,

[1] Dollie Radford.

piercing at once and scorching, a force which you cannot seize or grapple with, a force against which the intellect and the will are alike helpless, the subtle irresistible sense of sin whereby you know and feel that you are a sinner, that you are out of harmony with God, that you can be at peace neither with Him nor without Him, that you must either dwell in an eternal unrest or become very different from what you are.

2. Are there people who have no sense of sin? Very likely. The flame of a sword played and turned at the gate of Paradise, at the east of the garden of Eden. Whilst you are ranging about the wilderness, whilst you are pressing west and north and south, it is only the far-off glare and glitter of the sword that you will see at times, like the reflected brilliance from the electric light-house which leaps upon the clouds from below the horizon. It is only when you set your face eastwards and homewards, towards the home of light and the birthplace of the dawn; only when with weary heart and tired thoughts you seek for peace and satisfaction where alone it can be found; only then that you really encounter the sternness of the brandished flame.

¶ There is not anything more subtle and unsubstantial than the sense of sinfulness. If you try to set it down in black and white, if you try to fix it in the language of theology, it is bound to evade you: you have got your definition, your terminology, your religious phraseology, but your sense of sin has vanished. You prove to a man that we are all by nature children of wrath, that the Scripture hath concluded us all under sin, that all have sinned and fallen short, that there is none righteous, no, not one, that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. What is the use? The man you address assents, or dissents; but in either case he feels nothing: the flame of the sword is playing in some other direction at that moment. You cannot fix it; you cannot say, "lo, here," or "lo, there"; for even as you speak it is gone. Nothing is more clumsy, more ineffective, more useless, than arguments and statements about the sense of sin. And yet nothing is more real, more inexorable, more impossible to overpass.[1]

> Strange powers unused like poison burn in me:
> Cruel quicksilver thro' my veins they creep.
> What hour will bring mine infelicity
> Some drowsy cup from the mild founts of sleep?

[1] Rayner Winterbotham.

Tired sieges of high castles never taken,
  Desires like great king-falcons never cast,
Beautiful quests all wearily forsaken,
  Figure the fiery arras of the Past.
The pale Dreams walk on the horizons grey:
  Like stars they tread the dawn with flaming feet:
Their eyes for evermore are turned away.
  I heard their silver trumpets once entreat:—
Low sighed the caitiff Voice: "They sound in vain.
  Let them go by. It is not worth the Pain."[1]

III.

The Recovery of the Tree of Life.

Although, by reason of his transgression, man was driven out of Paradise, and debarred from access to the tree of life, he was not to be for ever excluded from the one or the other. Both are reserved in safe keeping until the time of the end, and in the restored Paradise the faithful shall "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. ii. 7), and "the leaves of the tree shall be for the healing of the nations" (Rev. xxii. 2).

1. Man is driven out of the garden where it stands, but immediately the education begins which, if he will submit to it, is to bring him back at last to the Paradise of God where the tree of life will be restored to him. And all the training that comes in between is of one sort. Everything from Genesis to Revelation has one purpose,—to teach man the hopelessness, the folly, the unsatisfactoriness, of a merely wilful and selfish life; to bring men by every discipline of sorrow or joy to see the nobleness and fruitfulness of obedience and consecration. When that is learned, then the lost tree reappears. Hidden through all the lingering centuries, there it is, when man is ready for it, blooming in the Paradise of God.

2. If man is to take of the tree of life he can take of it only by facing the flaming sword which guards its place. If man is to eat of the produce of the ground he is no longer to eat it as it springs forth of itself, but thorns and thistles are

[1] Rachel Annand Taylor.

springing out of the ground at the same time, and in the sweat of his brow he is to take the fair and necessary fruits of the earth. The fruits of the earth are no less desirable and necessary than before, but now they are to be taken under a new condition. The same is true of the tree of life; it is still as desirable as ever. Man may still dream of the joy and the glory of partaking of that tree of life; indeed he does so. If you turn to the other books of the Bible you will find that more than once the dream of that tree of life rises as a fair vision before the eyes of man. When the wise man would speak of the highest benefit which can be conferred upon man, even the participation of the quality and the power of wisdom, he says, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." The tree of life is as desirable for men as ever it was, but it can no longer be taken under the old conditions of ease. Now man must face danger in order to win it. Now it must be purchased at the risk of life. If man is to take the tree of life he must front the sword which turns every way to safeguard it from those who would approach.

¶ It is interesting and stimulating to observe how the Bible begins and ends with this figure of the tree of life. It has a prominent place in the first book, and it has a prominent place in the last book. And the whole of the intervening story, although the tree is not named, is one long commentary upon the text, one long dramatic exposition of the principle.

(1) You see the children of Israel led by the visible presence of Moses, and guided by the invisible hand of God, marching out of Egypt, and following a devious, perplexed, and harassed way through the wilderness towards Canaan. What are they doing? They are marching up the path against the flaming sword and the cherubim that they may eat of the fruit of the tree of life.

(2) You see the minority in Israel who are faithful to Jehovah, sensitive to His dignity, loyal to His control; a minority whose attitude, alike towards the sin of the people and towards the great national ideals and hopes, is expressed over and over again in the words of the prophets; you see them there, denouncing wickedness, protesting might and main against idolatry, suffering persecution; in the time when enemies are threatening the nation with destruction, calling the people to repentance, summoning up their courage, leading them against the foe, steadying them on God, and amid disaster and catastrophe keeping the torch of hope aflame; enduring all the pain and the shame of exile, and amid the allurements of foreign faiths and

worship keeping firm their belief in Jehovah, and their hearts pure before Him, in order that still, even at the last hour, Israel may be preserved, and restored to its own; and what are these doing? They are pressing up against the sword and the cherubim that keep the way to the tree of life, that the nation may eat thereof and live.

(3) You see Jesus; you follow His footsteps, and watch His way; you see Him tempted in the Wilderness; you see Him harassed and opposed by Scribes and Pharisees; you see the Herodians intriguing against Him; you see Him unrecognized and unsupported by His own people; you see Him laying upon His heart the sorrows and the burdens of the multitude; you see Him patient under persecution, faithful to the truth against opposition, obedient to the Higher Will even unto death; you see Him moving solitary and alone because of the misconceptions and the misunderstandings of His followers; you see Him pass within the deep shadow of Gethsemane, and then, utterly forsaken, ascending the way of sorrow, bearing His cross to the place of death; and what is He doing? He is moving upwards against the flaming sword and the Cherubim that He may win to the tree of life; and this not for Himself alone, but for us; that we might know how to come off conquerors, that we might know that there is a way to rise and to arrive, that we might have life in Him:

> And in the garden secretly,
> And on the cross on high,
> Might teach His brethren, and inspire
> To suffer and to die.

(4) And then you watch the early beginnings of the Christian Church; you see Peter boldly standing up in Jerusalem to preach the new faith, and to declare the glad tidings; you see Paul, himself a persecutor, suffering persecution for the Cross of Christ; you see him at the risk of offending his fellow-apostles, crossing the boundaries of Judaism, and carrying the gospel to the Gentiles throughout Asia Minor and into Europe; and always against resistance, always in the teeth of opposition; always amid great difficulties, and with infinite labour; and you see the Churches, set as a light in the midst of the people, treasuring the sacred deposit of the faith against the threatenings of heathen idolatry, and heathen philosophy, and their own weakness, mistakes, and infidelity; and always trying amid bafflements, and always fighting amid seeming failure, and always aspiring; and

these, what are they doing? They too are on the pathway that leads to the tree of life, and they are measuring themselves, to the top of their power, against the sword and against the guardian Cherubim.[1]

¶ The benefactors of men have always been compelled to confront that sword. In the smallest thing it is true. The man who makes a new discovery, the man who has invented something which will be a benefit to his fellow-men—how truly has he to encounter the sword and the flame of criticism. The sword and the flame distress all his fellows. Why does Roger Bacon fly for his life except that an ignorant public cannot understand the benefits that he is prepared to confer upon them? Why should men like Galileo be put to shame, but that the world stands with its sword and says, "We refuse to let you confer these blessings unless you pass the sword which we hold in the way of all"? There is the one profound illustration of all. When eager, ambitious souls that saw things only after a worldly fashion were ready to come and take Him by force and make Him a king, He stood amongst His disciples and said, "The crown, that is, the power of conferring benefit upon men—the crown, that is, the capacity of helping My brother man, can be won only through the Cross."[2]

3. So true is the beginning of the Bible to our continual life. So in our own experience we find the everlasting warrant of that much-disputed tale of Genesis. But, thank God, the end of the Bible is just as true. As true as this universal fact of all men's failure is the other fact, that no man's failure is final or necessarily fatal; that every man's lost tree of life is kept by God, and that he may find it again in God's Paradise if he comes there in humble consecration.

¶ Let us put figures and allegories aside for a moment. The truth of Christianity is this: that however a man has failed by his selfishness of the fulness of life for which God made him the moment that, led by the love of Christ, he casts his selfishness aside and consecrates himself to God, that lost possibility reappears; he begins to realize and attempt again in hope the highest idea of his life: the faded colours brighten; the crowding walls open and disappear. This is the deepest, noblest Christian consciousness. Very far off, very dimly seen as yet, hoped-for not by any struggle of its own but by the gift of the Mercy and Power to which it is now given, the soul that is in God believes

[1] E. W. Lewis. [2] W. Boyd Carpenter.

in its own perfectibility, and dares to set itself perfection as the mark of life, short of which it cannot rest satisfied.

And when this change has come, when a soul has dared again to realize and desire the life for which God made it, then also comes the other change. The hindrances change back again to their true purpose and are once more the helpers. That, too, is a most noble part of the Christian's experience, and one which every Christian recognizes. You prayed to God when you became His servant that He would take your enemies away, that He would free you from those circumstances which had hindered you from living a good life. But He did something better than what you prayed for. As you looked at your old enemies they did not disappear, but their old faces altered. You saw them still, but you saw them now changed into His servants. The business that had made you worldly stretched out new hands, all heavy with the gifts of charity. The nature which had stood like a wall between you and the truth of a Personal Creator opened now a hundred voices all declaring Him. The men who had tempted you to pride and passion, all came with their opportunities of humility and patience. Everything was altered when you were altered. The Cherubim had left their hostile guard above the gate, and now stood inviting you to let them lead you to the tree of life. This is the Fall supplanted by the Redemption. This completes the whole Bible of a human life.[1]

The Tree of Life in Eden stood
With mystic Fruits of Heavenly Food,
  Which endless life afford,—
That Life, by man's transgression lost:—
Cast out is man by Angel-host:
  Until by Man restored.

In vain the lambs poured forth their blood;
In vain the smoking altars stood;
  All unatoned was sin:
Must greater be the sacrifice
Before the gate of Paradise
  Can let the fallen in?

The Lord of Life His Life must give
That man an endless Life may live,
  And death's dark doom reverse.
The Cross is made the mystic Tree,
The Blood that flowed on Calvary
  Hath washed away the curse.

[1] Phillips Brooks.

Now Eden's gate is ope'd once more;
The guardian Angel's watch is o'er,
And sheathed the flaming sword:
The Tree of Life now blooms afresh,
Its precious Fruit the very Flesh
Of the Incarnate Word.[1]

[1] Edwin L. Blenkinsopp

Am I my Brother's Keeper?

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Am I my Brother's Keeper?

And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper?—Gen. iv. 9.

Matthew Arnold was never tired of reminding us that while we go back to the ancient Greeks for lessons in art and beauty and culture, we must go to the Hebrews for instruction in religion and conduct. Every one now agrees that he was right. We feel that the Hebrew people had a genius for religion. We can trace it all through their literature. Whatever be the subject-matter —whether it be poetry, history, philosophy, legend or imaginative prose—when touched by the Hebrew genius it is charged with a passion for righteousness, and becomes a vehicle for lessons concerning ethics and religion which are the permanent heritage of the race. Gradually as the people developed and became self-conscious, the best of them felt that this national genius was not theirs by accident, but that they had as it were a mission for the world—to teach men to know God. And they looked forward to the day when the earth should be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. The topic before us is instinct with such religious instruction.

Take a glance at the picture. Abel lay on the green grass, and earth's innocent flowers shuddered under the dew of blood. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said"—for the first murderer is also the first liar—"I know not;" and he insolently added—for the first murderer is also the first egotist—"Am I my brother's keeper?" But the Lord sweeps aside the daring falsehood, the callous question. "And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now thou art cursed." And Cain fled to the land of his exile, with the brand of heaven's wrath on his soul, and on his brow.

The lesson which the Old Testament narrative teaches is,

obviously, the sin of social irresponsibility. We may conveniently approach the subject from the positive aspect—*Responsibility*, and the duties which it involves—and deal with it in three parts:

I. The Responsibility of every Man for his Brother.
II. The Special Responsibility of the Christian.
III. The Responsibility of the Church.

I.

The Responsibility of Man for Man.

i. God's Question.

"The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?"

1. This is not God's first question, for He had already addressed to Adam—as to the representative of the human race—that personal inquiry which the Holy Spirit still brings home to every heart convicted of sin, to every man when he first realizes that he is naked before God and longs to hide himself from Him: "Where art thou?" No! this is God's second question, "Where is thy brother?" And just as the first question was addressed to man upon his first conviction of sin, so this second question is addressed to man after his first struggle with his fellow-man. It is asked of the victor concerning the vanquished in the cruel competition of life, "Where is thy brother?"

2. We are all concerned in this question. Let us take it as addressed to ourselves individually.

(1) First of all, we may consider the question so far as it relates to all those who are near and dear to us; all those whose names and faces are familiar to us; all those who are connected with us by the bonds of kindred or affection; parents, wife, husband, children, all that inner circle of friends and relations, all whom we acknowledge to have been, in some sense or other, committed by God to our safe keeping and care.

¶ *The family* is our ideal of all love and service. Almost all our thoughts of affection and union begin and associate themselves with the family. The home,—the hearth,—the family altar,—the nursery,—the early childhood,—the far-off memories,—the

sister's tenderness,—the brother's care,—the mother,—the father: are any words so eloquent to the heart of man? The family is the cradle of love.

¶ The theme of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* is a sister's devotion, and if we want a picture of love in the home it would be difficult to find a more simple or more beautiful one than that of the closing lines of this poem—

> Days, weeks, months, years
> Afterwards, when both were wives
> With children of their own;
> Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
> Their lives bound up in tender lives;
> Laura would call the little ones
> And tell them of her early prime,
> Those pleasant days long gone.
>
> Then joining hands to little hands
> Would bid them cling together,—
> "For there is no friend like a sister
> In calm or stormy weather;
> To cheer one on the tedious way,
> To fetch one if one goes astray,
> To lift one if one totters down,
> To strengthen whilst one stands."

(2) Responsibility, however, reaches further out than this. Responsibility rests upon us, in some way or other, with regard to every one with whom we are brought into contact: the friends and acquaintances of our life; all those with whom we have business relations; the various members of that circle of society in which we move; our more casual acquaintances; the fellow-travellers we meet on our journeys—there is a responsibility resting upon us with regard to them all. "Where is thy brother?" Where is he, morally and spiritually, so far as the influence, however slight it may have been, which I have exercised over him goes? To have laughed at the evil or profane joke; to have spoken the thoughtless, the foolish, or the angry word; to have exhibited irritability or impatience—to say nothing of far more grievous stumbling-blocks than these—must have had some influence over others. Who is there that has not, at some time or other, said and done something the effect of which was evil

on some one else?—something which tended to deface in the soul of another the image of God; something which tended to lead that soul into temptation, if not into sin. What marvellous opportunities have been afforded us in life of helping others to resist temptation, and to stand firm! How have these opportunities been used? Have we used them at all? "Where is thy brother?" The question is a very searching one.

¶ To an Englishman it seems a matter of little or no consequence who his neighbours are, and if he be a resident of a city he may occupy a dwelling for a year in ignorance even of the name of the family next door. But in China it is otherwise. If a crime takes place the neighbours are held guilty of something analogous to what English law calls "misprision of treason," in that when they knew of a criminal intention they did not report it. It is vain to reply, "I did not know." You are a "neighbour," and therefore you must have known. In a memorial published in the Peking *Gazette* a few years ago, the Governor of one of the central provinces reported in regard to a case of parricide that he had had the houses of all the neighbours pulled down, on the ground of their gross dereliction of duty in not exerting a good moral and reformatory influence over the criminal! Such a proceeding would probably strike an average Chinese as eminently reasonable.[1]

I thought in my own secret soul, if thus
(By the strong sympathy that knits mankind)
A power untried exists in each of us,
By which a fellow-creature's wavering mind
To good or evil deeds may be inclined;
Shall not an awful questioning be made:
(And we perchance no fitting answer find:)
Whom hast *thou* sought to rescue or persuade?
Whom roused from sinful sloth? whom comforted, afraid?[2]

ii. Cain's Answer.

"I know not: am I my brother's keeper?"

1. The first part of Cain's answer, "I know not," was a *lie*, as most selfish answers are, and behind the lie was the sin of irresponsibility. And do we not continually betake ourselves to these "refuges of lies" in the bitter hour of remorse, in the dreary

[1] A. H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, 228. [2] Mrs. Norton.

consciousness of self-degrading fault? "I am not responsible; this tendency to evil, intemperance, gambling, impurity, is the burden of heredity. I might as well blame myself for the shape of my head or the colour of my eyes as for the inevitable dispositions which determine my conduct. I am not responsible." And all the while we are proving the falseness of the excuse we urge. *Why* the need to urge an excuse if, indeed, we are not responsible? Did we ever find ourselves compelled to seek such excuse for the shape of our head or the colour of our eyes? Whence, then, this necessity here, where morality is in question, when our own behaviour is at stake? The parallel, in truth, is demonstrated to be a false one by the very process of its assertion. This plea of necessity is but a "refuge of lies" to which the guilty fly; for "conscience does make cowards of us all."

2. The second part of Cain's answer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" was an *insult*. To what a shameful pitch of presumptuous insolence had Cain arrived when he could thus insult the Lord God. A man may blaspheme and blaspheme frightfully, but it is usually because he forgets God, and ignores His presence. Cain, however, was conscious that God was speaking to him. He heard Him say, "Where is Abel thy brother?" and yet he dared, with the coolest impertinence, to reply to God, "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" As much as to say—"Do you think that I have to keep him as he keeps his sheep? Am I a shepherd as he was, and am I to take as much care of him as he did of a lame lamb?" The cool insolence of Cain is an indication of the state of heart which led up to his murdering his brother; and it was also a part of the result of his having committed that terrible crime. He would not have proceeded to the cruel deed of bloodshed if he had not first cast off the fear of God and been ready to defy his Maker. Having committed murder, the hardening influence of sin upon Cain's mind must have been intense, and so at last he was able to speak out to God's face what he felt within his heart, and to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

3. Thus, first with a lie, and then with an insult, Cain replies to God's question. But *the question is not a negative one, and it*

cannot be answered negatively. Men often urge the innocence of their conduct: they say, they are sure that they have never done any one any harm. The excuse is a salve to the conscience of careless people, who are using their lives here for mere pleasure and frivolity. Almost all such persons will tell you that they are doing no harm; and this is not to be wondered at, because every one who does what is foolish and shortsighted must have some way of justifying himself, otherwise he would hardly act in a foolish and shortsighted way; and this plea that he is doing no one any harm is the simplest and most plausible that can be set up. But is it likely to be true that a man—even the best of men—has never hurt his neighbour by word or deed? Many men think so, and there is much to strengthen them in their belief; it is the commonest thing in the world to hear the most loose and ungodly lives excused upon this plea, that such an one was after all a good kind of man and never did any one any harm. Look closely at this notion of doing no one any harm and see what it is worth. How far will it bear examination? Is it not really a repetition of the old excuse of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" If we spend all our time taking the weeds out of our garden, we shall certainly not gather any flowers; so, if we never get beyond the principle of doing no harm to our neighbour, it is just as certain that we shall do him no good. The question is a positive one, and in some way or other—each man's conscience knows best how—God expects from each one of us the positive answer, *I am my brother's keeper.*

¶ The chief assertion of religious morality is that white is a colour. Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers; virtue is a vivid and separate thing, like pain or a particular smell. Mercy does not mean not being cruel or sparing people revenge or punishment: it means a plain and positive thing like the sun, which one has either seen or not seen.[1]

¶ Cain lives to-day, and the blood of Abel still cries to God. And there is the Cain spirit in every man who does not accept his responsibility for his brother; living it out honestly and earnestly in everything through the whole seven days of the week. There are dead men and women and children crying with an awful cry. How these cries go up to God. Men who go far up in balloons tell us that they reach a height where the silence

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles.*

is intense, deep, oppressive—a thing that can be felt. The roll of the city is all unheard, the roar of the sea, the hubbub of our busy life—all is silenced. But startling in its suddenness comes sometimes the shrill cry of a child. Ah! the things that God does not hear: the things that do not go up to heaven—the empty prayers; the pretences and pride of us men and women and ten thousand other things. But the thousands of girls—almost every one of them having to tell a bitter story of betrayal, an anguish of shame, a hell of despair—their cry goes up to Heaven! The cry of the downtrodden, the wronged and injured, the overworked and underpaid. Listen to the words of St. James—"Go to now, ye rich men, weep, howl. Your gold is cankered, your garments are moth-eaten. Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped your fields is kept back, and the cries of them have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."[1]

¶ Outside the Bible no one has interpreted this great principle more splendidly than Victor Hugo in his wonderful portrait of Jean Valjean. For nineteen years the State held Jean Valjean between its palms as a boy holds a butterfly, and when the palms were parted there had been no change of character. For nineteen years the State held him a criminal in the galleys as a boy holds the humble-bee in the sweet cup of the hollyhock. And when the penitentiary doors opened and the State parted its fingers, and the criminal buzzed out into society again, the sting was as sharp and the poison as virulent as ever. The reason was that character cannot be changed by outside pressure alone. Jean Valjean went out into the world with his heart full of hate and bitterness, and in that spirit he came to the door of a friend of Jesus Christ. The good bishop, Hugo tells us, had a great heart. He was not a great thinker. He felt that the world was suffering from a cruel disease. He felt the fever, he heard the sobbing, of the patient. He did not spend his time trying to find out how sin came, nor why; but he tried to help a little. So he opened the door to this wicked man and welcomed him. While the bishop slept the criminal in the man awoke, and he stole the silver from the bishop's house and escaped. The next morning he was brought back again by the police, and the bishop saved him and sent the police away. And when they were gone he looked into the poor, astonished man's face, and said, "Jean Valjean, my brother! I have bought your soul from you. I have drawn it from black thoughts that lead to perdition. I have given it to goodness." And the man, redeemed by the

[1] M. G. Pearse.

words, "My brother," by the quick tear of sympathy, by the Christ in the heart-throb of this large-hearted man, went out to lead a new life. And Jean Valjean became Father Madeleine.[1]

I closed my hands upon a moth,
And when I drew my palms apart,
Instead of dusty, broken wings,
I found a bleeding human heart.

I crushed my foot upon a worm
That had my garden for its goal,
But when I drew my foot aside,
I found a dying human soul.[2]

4. For every man therefore the question is, *What is the best thing that I can do?* Whether in the city or in the country, I, in my little sphere, with my limited ability, have my life to live, and how am I to answer God's question? Well, if we live in the city; let us not lose ourselves in the thought of its vastness. The great world of London is so apt to swallow one up, to paralyze one with a sense of helplessness. We listen to its statistics, and they appal us if we take them in, which most of us do not. Thank God for the men who have problems and theories for its salvation, but they are and must be subjects of controversy. The one thoroughly good thing we can do is to know the Lord Jesus Christ, to call Him Lord, and then, looking into His face, to say, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?

¶ If every one who professes to care about the poor would make himself the friend of one poor person, there would soon be no insoluble problem of "the masses," and London would be within measurable distance of becoming a city of happy homes.[3]

It is not much
To give a gentle word or kindly touch
To one gone down
Beneath the world's cold frown.

And yet—who knows
How great a thing from such a little grows?
O, oftentimes,
Some brother upward climbs,

[1] L. A. Banks. [2] Dora Sigerson Shorter. [3] Canon Barnett.

And hope again
Uplifts its head, that in the dust had lain,
And sorrow's night
Gives place to morning's light.

Because of hands
Outstretched to help—a heart that understands,
And, pitying,
Counts it a Christlike thing—
Not to despise
The fallen one who at the wayside lies—
But, for His sake,
A brother's part to take.[1]

II.

The Special Responsibility of the Christian.

1. The question, Where is thy brother? comes to those who follow Christ, not only as it comes to other men, but also with another meaning, a meaning which enables us to give a very blessed answer to it. Abel was a type of Christ. Abel's sacrifice is the first recorded type of the sacrifice on Calvary. He who died on the cross is our Brother. As we hear the voice of God calling to us, Where is thy brother? we answer, Here is our Brother, crucified for sin, buried, risen, ascended, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ever interceding for us. It is a new demand, a new question.

O sweetest Blood, that can implore
Pardon of God, and heaven restore,
  The heaven which sin had lost:
While Abel's blood for vengeance pleads,
What Jesus shed still intercedes
  For those who wrong Him most.

2. And not only is Jesus the Brother about whom the question is asked of each of us, Where is thy brother? but in Him we all are brethren. Again, the question comes with a new meaning. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye *love one another*." Accordingly the perfect life does not consist in the cultivation of

[1] E. H. Divall, *A Believer's Rest*, 67.

an isolated personal perfection. Christ lived in God; He was detached from the world, He spent whole nights in prayer; but the account of Him is incomplete until we add, "He went about doing good." "He came to seek and to save the lost." "As I have loved you," He said. In these solitary hours which He spent in communion with the Father He renewed the fires of His love for men, maintained and augmented His strength for serving them. While deepening His own delight in the Father's love, He added intensity to His passion for raising the most miserable of mankind into the same transcendent blessedness. And so the true imitation of Christ includes not only the discovery of the immeasurable strength which a devout soul may find in God, but the actual use of that strength for the service of mankind.

¶ There is a passage which I dare say some of you may remember in one of Cardinal Newman's sermons, preached and published before he left the Anglican Communion, in which he presses upon his hearers with all his characteristic earnestness the obligation to attempt the ideal Christian life. He asks, "Where should we find that ideal Christian life?" and he answers: "In the humble monk and the holy nun, in those who, whether they remain in seclusion or are sent over the earth, have calm faces and sweet plaintive voices, and spare frames, and gentle manners and hearts won from the world and wills subdued, and for their meekness meet with insult, and for their purity with slander, and for their courtesy with suspicion, and for their courage with cruelty; yet they find Christ everywhere, Christ their all-sufficient portion, to make up to them both here and hereafter all they suffer, all they dare for His name's sake." Now, God forbid that I should withhold sympathy and reverence from saintly men and women who in evil times have forsaken the world in order to find God. No doubt among those who have taken the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience there have been many who took them not merely to make sure of eternal blessedness for themselves, but that they might be free to serve others. Honour, all honour, to their memory! But in Dr. Newman's account of the men and women who have maintained the Christian tradition from Apostolic times to our own, the passion for serving and redeeming man receives no place. By prayer and fasting, and poverty and severe discipline, they have overcome temptation to sin, and become saints. There is something wanting in the picture. A few years ago I met with a young woman earning eleven or twelve shillings a week in a Birmingham warehouse,

who had been filled with affectionate pity for another young woman, a member of my church, who had worked with her and who, through illness, had lost her situation and her wages. She took the sick girl to her own poor lodging, fed her, nursed her, cared for her. I am afraid my friend had not the gentle manners and the sweet plaintive voice of Dr. Newman's charming picture. But that seems to me the true imitation of Christ.[1]

¶ I remember, too, another young woman who came to me in great trouble, and told me that her father was drunk two or three times a week, that he insisted on having a large part of her earnings to spend it in drink, and that when he came home at night with drink in him he often beat her; life was becoming intolerable to her. She wanted to know whether it would be right for her to leave him. Her mother was dead; her father, if she left him, would be alone; was it her duty to stay? I told her that in my judgment his treatment of her had released her from the obligation, but I asked her whether it would be possible for her to be happy at night if she went elsewhere, whether she would not be always thinking that in his drunken fits her father might come to harm, and whether she could not regard the care of this unhappy man, with all the suffering and misery it brought upon her, as the special service to which Christ had appointed her. She looked up, hesitated for a moment, and then said, "I will." I do not think she would have made a good model for an artist painting a saint. She did not live in a picturesque convent, but in a back court in Birmingham. Her dress was not picturesque, but the somewhat unlovely dress of a poor working girl. Yet that seems to me to be the true imitation of Christ. Let me finish the story. She came to me three months later, and told me, with the light of joy on her face, that her father had never come home drunk since that night she had resolved to care for him for Christ's sake.[2]

How many souls of strongest powers
To selfish solitude consigned,
Have whiled in idleness their hours,
Nor nobly sought to serve mankind!

But not to such the Muse may give
Her sacred wreath, the Patriot's pride!
Since for themselves content to live,
So for themselves alone they died.

[1] R. W. Dale. [2] *Ibid.*

Happy the man who for his God
  Has left the world and all its ways,
To tread the path the saints have trod,
  And spend his life in prayer and praise!

Unhappy, who himself to please
  Forsakes the path where duty lies,
Either in love of selfish ease,
  Or in contempt of human ties.

In vain have they the world resigned
  Who only seek an earthly rest;
Nor to the soul that spurns mankind
  Can ever solitude be blest.[1]

3. There is yet another encouragement to the follower of Christ to consider his brother, and it is a most wonderful and gracious one. Whatever service he renders to a brother he renders to Christ Himself.

I bend to help a little straying child
  And soothe away its fears,
When lo! the Wondrous Babe, all undefiled,
  Looks at me through its tears.

Beside a cot I kneel with pitying eyes,
  A dying brow I fan—
The pallet seems a cross and on it lies
  One like the Son of Man!

The way is long, and when I pause to share
  My cup, my crust of bread,
With some poor wanderer—oh, vision rare!—
  A halo crowns his head.

O'er sin's dark stream there comes a drowning cry,
  Its woeful tide I stem
And grasp for one who sinks—the Christ is there,
  I touch His garment's hem.

O Presence, ever new and ever dear,
  My Master, can it be
In Thy great day of coming I shall hear,
  "Thou didst it unto Me"?

[1] E. Caswall.

III.

The Church's Responsibility.

i. The Corporate Life of the Church.

1. The instinct of social work, the idea of self-sacrifice for the many, of united effort for the common cause which is the good of all, is perfectly satisfied by the conception of the Holy Catholic Church. It is true that to many the Church has come to mean simply an institution for the spiritual advantage chiefly of the wealthier classes; but that, surely, is a grotesque parody of the Church, which in its fulness and glory means nothing else than a spiritual society founded by our Lord Himself, to be His Kingdom on earth. The Church is a great Mutual Benefit Society, the greatest which has ever existed among men, and the salvation which the Church offers is no selfish or solitary thing. And if we realize what is involved in being members of the Holy Catholic Church, we cannot rest until we are doing something, however little it may be, towards making this mutual helpfulness a more real thing than it was before. The Bible comes to us with lessons tending in this direction on every page. We are "members one of another"; "Let him that loveth God, love his brother also"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." St. John is the strongest and clearest of all the inspired writers on this great lesson of mutual love and social service. He makes it a test: "By this we know that we have passed out of death into life." Why? How? Not because we have accepted the Christian Creed, not by participation in the Sacraments, but "because we love the brethren."

She sits in beauty by the world's Sin-Gate,
  Where pass the hopes that come not back again,—
Lorn hearts and lonely, souls of love and hate,
  Sad women, weary children, broken men;

And evermore her Master's royal love
  Goes down among the dark and hopeless bands,
Bids drooping souls rejoice, and look above,
  And trust, unfearing, to His wounded hands.[1]

[1] L. Maclean Watt, *In Poets' Corner*, 66.

2. But our practice falls painfully short of what it ought to be and might be. Some of us have shaken off the fetters of Individualism. We have accepted, with our lips at least, this much more glorious creed of mutual service and co-operation; but how little there is really of social life even in the best organized Church! Very few of us consider that the fact of being fellow-communicants creates any real demand on our sympathy or help. Most of us worship year after year in a church, seeing the same faces round us, kneeling next to us at the altar, and yet go out into the world and treat them as strangers.

¶ Again and again complaint has reached me from young men who have come up to London to seek their fortune; they have left home and friends and all companionship behind them, and have come up to hard toil in this grasping, grinding city. They are cut off from all the enjoyments and amenities of a young man's natural life; and the Church is just the place where they might find what they need. The Church might supply a young man with these natural enjoyments, all the more delightful because they would be pure and good. But *does* the Church? That is the point. Again and again it has been said to me, "I have found such and such a church; I like the preaching and the ritual; I make my Communions there; but I don't know anybody. Nobody has taken me up. Nobody has shown me any help; nobody has said anything to me; nobody is interested in me." Well, *there* is a way in which every one of us could do something to realize the social ideal of the Catholic Church. We could stretch out the right hand of fellowship to our brother-worshippers, and do something to break down a little of our national English stiffness and shyness, and enable people to realize—what, as a matter of fact, they do feel in their hearts—the bond which unites all those who meet together in the mystical Body of Christ. Very different would be the aspect of the world if we all did that.[1]

¶ I sat a little while ago in one of the chambers of the National Gallery, and my attention was caught by the vast miscellaneous crowd as it sauntered or galloped through the rooms. All sorts and conditions of people passed by—rich and poor, the well-dressed and the beggarly, students and artisans, soldiers and sailors, maidens just out of school and women bowed and wrinkled in age; but, whoever they were, and however unarresting may have been all the other pictures in the chamber, every single soul in that mortal crowd stopped dead and silent

[1] G. W. E. Russell.

before a picture of our Saviour bearing His cross to the hill. And when the Church is seen to be His body—His very body: His lips, His eyes, His ears, His hands, His feet, His brain, His heart: His very body—and when the Church repeats, in this her corporate life, the brave and manifold doings of Judaea and Galilee, she too shall awe the multitude, and by God's grace she shall convert the pregnant wonder into deep and grateful devotion.[1]

¶ How far we are from reaching the Christ ideal! James Russell Lowell was a poet, a statesman, a man of the world. You know his poem, "A Parable":

Said Christ our Lord, "I will go and see
How the men, My brethren, believe in Me."

Great organs surged through arches dim
Their jubilant floods in praise of Him;
And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall,
He saw His own image high over all.
But still, wherever His steps they led,
The Lord in sorrow bent down His head;
And from under the heavy foundation-stones,
The Son of Mary heard bitter groans.

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure,
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?"

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.
These set He in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment-hem,
For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said He,
"The images ye have made of Me!"

ii. The Missionary Duty of the Church.

1. There is another aspect of Church life. Christ Himself has laid the *responsibility of missionary service* upon the Church, and therefore there cannot be sound and healthy life in the Church where it is ignored. We must think of the word "missionary" in

[1] J. H. Jowett.

its true sense,—it matters not whether we apply it to work at home or abroad—the Church must go out "to seek and to save that which was lost."

We have found in the Old Testament the blackest picture of a brother's sin. We can find in the New Testament a very different picture. Andrew, the First Apostle, has always been chosen as the illustrative type of a missionary *because he brought his brother to Christ.* The two brothers, thus placed in juxtaposition, show the completely different (and yet by no means unusually different) view which two men could take of the relations and duties of brotherhood. Just as the stars shine brightest on a dark night, so the dark background of Cain's selfishness and jealousy serves to enhance the brilliance of Andrew's conduct, whose first thought was to find his brother and to make him the sharer of his own happiness.

Complete as is the difference between the light and dark, and complete as is the contrast between the action of these two men, the essence of the difference between the careers of the Apostle and the fratricide lay in this one point—a matter which men are used to look upon as very much a question of degree, and influenced immensely by differing circumstances—the way in which they respectively regarded brotherhood as a relationship entailing, or not entailing, certain natural duties. "Am I my brother's keeper?" said Cain, and when he asked that question, he seemed to take it for granted that he had made a defence of himself to which no exception could possibly be taken. "Where is Abel thy brother? . . . I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" seemed unanswerable. But with Andrew it was just the opposite. His first thought, on making the great discovery of Christ, was to make his brother the partner of his good fortune: "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias."

> A brother's heart had Andrew. Joy beyond
> All joy to him, the promised Christ to find:
> But heavenly joy may not to duty blind;
> He cannot rest, his bliss is incomplete
> Till Simon sits with him at Jesus' feet,—
> His brother then by more than natural bond.[1]

[1] G. T. Coster.

2. Missions! Christianity alone could give birth to them. Men may be disposed to disparage them, but have they ever seriously reflected what civilized Europe would have given to pagan populations, if Christian missionaries had not been there? Alas! what would it have brought to them? Rifles and other fire-arms wherewith to destroy each other; brandy and opium, to brutalize and to degrade! But amongst those European conquerors, in the very refinement of their vices more barbarous than their victims, there are those who have at heart a strange love. They come to these pagans. They tell them of the Father in heaven who loves them, and of brothers on earth who wish to save them. They relate to them the marvellous history of the love of the Son of God. They are persecuted. They are reviled. They may be murdered. But soon, on the earth watered by their blood, Christian Churches are seen to flourish. It is thus that the net of the gospel, formerly borne by twelve fishermen of Galilee, finds its extremities meet after having compassed the whole earth.

The platted thorns that pierced His bleeding brow,
The cross of shame, the spikes that tore His palms,
Are blazoned o'er her banners, treasured now,
All consecrate with martyrs' dying psalms.

Sweet daughter of the King!—her beauty bright
Hath yet the bloodstains starred upon her vest,
Of faithful hearts, who, through a loveless night
Of flame and sword went gloriously to rest.[1]

[1] L. Maclean Watt, *In Poets' Corner*, 66.

Walking with God.

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WALKING WITH GOD.

Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.—Gen. v. 24.

How strange it is, if you are reading the Bible from the beginning, to come to this text! Here was a man in the very childhood of the world, who seemed distinguished from those who lived around him and from those who came after him, because he walked with God. What does it mean? The words which would explain it are so simple, and the thoughts which they contain are so sublime, that one almost hesitates to speak about it. Yet we might shape it perhaps, at any rate in outline, according to our own experience, and we might say, this primitive man, not seeing or touching God any more than we do, yet realized habitually His existence; recognized His presence—His close presence—with Him every day; as one would pass many days in the society of some dear friend, so he passed his days in the society of God, but with this beautiful difference: we cannot spend many consecutive days with our dearest friends; some of them we are obliged to leave, others we are obliged to lose; with God the companionship need not be intermitted. It was not necessary to leave Him, and the man therefore kept up a companionship unbroken. When he woke from sleep in the morning, the first thought that rushed into his mind would be:—

> Still, still with Thee,
> When purple morning breaketh,
> When the bird waketh,
> And the shadows flee.

And as he went about his business—the business of the herd, or of the ploughing, or the ordering of his household—the sweet consciousness of that companionship might be submerged beneath the surface for a little, but surely to emerge again directly

the occasion was presented. The occupations of the day did not disturb the reality of the life, any more than business men, who love their wives and children, feel that their love is in the least affected because they have to go into the city in the morning, and to be plunged into the toil and the cares of the day's business. Quite the contrary, it is that love which animates their toil and keeps them close to the task, and it is the thought of coming home in the evening, the welcome of the wife and the smiles of the children, which presents itself to them as the reward of their labour. Just so, when the pressure relaxed, Enoch would exclaim: "Return unto thy rest, O my Soul; resume thine intercourse with thy Beloved." We may fancy also that he talked with God, talked sometimes aloud, talked also when in the presence of others it was necessary to talk in silence. Sometimes his words were uttered in the presence of God, as in the presence of a mighty Potentate, and words would come slowly, with trembling and fearfulness. But much oftener he would talk to God familiarly, and in a childlike way; would tell Him of the cares and anxieties of the day; would ask his God to come and share his deepest joys; and would not hesitate to ask whatever he wanted, keeping up an hourly conversation with Him. This "walk with God" would be the dominating fact of the man's life: the foundation on which the palace of life would be built: the ground harmony from which the variations of his music would be developed. And such a walk with God, maintained for some years, would render it inapplicable to speak of death in connexion with the man; and, when death came, it would be necessary to use another phrase altogether, and to say, "He was not; for God took him."

¶ That we should establish ourselves in a sense of God's Presence, by continually conversing with Him. That it was a shameful thing to quit His conversation to think of trifles and fooleries.[1]

¶ That in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to Him, we must at first apply to Him with some diligence: but that after a little care we should find His love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.[2]

[1] Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, 6.
[2] *Ibid.* 10.

His priest am I, before Him day and night,
Within His holy place;
And death, and life, and all things dark and bright,
I spread before His Face.
Rejoicing with His joy, yet ever still,
For silence is my song;
My work to bend beneath His blessed will,
All day, and all night long—
For ever holding with Him converse sweet,
Yet speechless, for my gladness is complete.[1]

I.

Enoch walked with God.

The phrase "walking with God" is used continually throughout the Old Testament to characterize a religious life. In the brief record of Enoch's life in Gen. v. 22–24 it is mentioned twice that he "walked with God." It was evidently the fact which was most noticeable in him, and it passed down to posterity as his distinguishing mark. Again in Gen. vi. 9 the same statement is made about Noah, the preacher of righteousness before the Flood. In Gen. xvii. a slightly different expression is used of Abraham: God said to him, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," and Abraham afterwards, in chapter xxiv., speaks of God as "The Lord before whom I walk." This expression about Abraham is taken up again in the prayer of Hezekiah: "Remember, O Lord," he says, "how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart." And one of the Psalmists in the 111th Psalm declares his intention of "walking before the Lord in the land of the living." In the 16th Psalm, again, the same thought is stated in a different way: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." In the Prophet Micah, this "walking with God" is mentioned as one of three things that God requires of man: "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." And then, in the last book of the Old Testament, we are told about Levi that he "walked with God in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from their iniquity" (Mal. ii. 6).

[1] Gerhardt Tersteegen, trans. by Frances Bevan.

In the New Testament we learn that we are to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We are to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." We are to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." We are to "walk circumspectly." We are to "walk in the light." We are to "walk by faith."

What are we to understand, then, when we are told that Enoch walked with God?

1. First of all it is implied that God is a person as Enoch is a person. This twofold conception is necessary to any adequate idea of religion. There is a theory which makes man the only active spirit in religion; all religion is but man's reflection upon the world, and upon his own nature. Now, that theory is in truth a denial of religion. To negate God, to blot out the Divine Personality, is to undermine religion. Some reverence in face of the mysterious forces of the world, and the majesty of the universe, some sort of naturalistic piety, there might be, but it would fall short altogether of what is the very essence of religion. That essence is communion and intercourse between *persons*—the person man and the Person God. Communion with a universe depersonalized does not yield religion, and it leaves man in that most terrible loneliness—the embodiment of a great need for which there is no satisfaction, and his life one great agonizing cry to which there is no response.

¶ Herbert Spencer's suggestion that God may be superpersonal, some sort of Being other and higher than personal, does not serve us at all. If God is superpersonal, He is nothing to us, for the highest being we can conceive is conceived in the terms of personality. We cannot think outside ourselves, and an absolutely inconceivable God is to us no God. The basis of religion rests on this as *one* of its two fundamental convictions—that there resides in this universe the eternal self-conscious Spirit who made it, who goes on making it, and who reveals Himself to man. Religious truth is not the product of the action of man's mind upon a passive universe. Something is *given to* man—given by One who knows that He gives; a communication is made by the eternal self-conscious Spirit to the human spirit.[1]

2. To walk with God, in the next place, implies *harmony*. "The carnal man is enmity against God," and there must first

[1] T. R. Williams.

be reconciliation. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos asked that question, and there is logic in that little word "can." An appeal is it to the nature of things, and "the nature of things is the law of God." Harmony of sound is music. Harmony of word to thought is poetry. Harmony of colour is beauty. The most beautiful thing in nature is the rainbow; God blends the colours. Life, the philosophers are telling us, is correspondence with environment. In disease or death something is thrown out of correspondence. The deaf man is thrown out of correspondence with the world of sound; the blind man with the world of beauty. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Co-relation of part with part is intimate, and any interference means friction. The perfect workmanship is frictionless. Sin is disagreement, fermentation, rebellion, alienation, estrangement, mutiny, discord—the one all-pervading discord of the universe.

¶ The great dramatist, in the *Tempest*, makes Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love at first meeting. A glance, he says, and they "changed eyes." The man who "walks with God" is he who has changed eyes with God. He sees as God sees. "There is not an honest student of the Bible anywhere," says Joseph Cook, "who is not willing to admit that salvation is harmony with God"—loving what God loves, and hating what God hates.

¶ Culture is pained by contact with coarseness. The eye of the artist is troubled with a false blending of colour. The ear of the musician is tortured with dissonance. Handel tells us that a flatness felled him like a blow. And a high, lofty moral nature is wounded by the world's sin and shame, and shrinks with grief at its beholding. Love and hate can never be at peace. Corruption and cleanliness must necessarily quarrel. This is a law woven into the nature of things. Until a man is washed by the blood of Jesus from the guilt of sin and the power of sin and the love of sin, he cannot be at peace in the presence of infinite holiness.[1]

3. But, again, to walk with God is to keep the commandments of God. For what supremely attracts the Divine approbation is not greatness, but goodness, *moral goodness*. Enoch had neither worldly wealth, nor grandeur, nor power. He was not famed for any of these. His excellency in the sight of God, and what

[1] M. J. M'Leod.

distinguished him from his contemporaries, was his personal purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." That is the condition of the beatific vision. Only the pure in heart can see God, and only in the degree in which they are pure. The pure in heart behold Him here. The impure could not see Him even there—the vision of God, the sight of the King in His beauty, and of the land that is very far off, is vouchsafed not to science but to sanctity, not to talent but to love. In the spiritual world a man is measured, not by his gifts but by his graces, not by his intellect but by his likeness to God. God does not reason or remember, perhaps, just as we do, but He loves. He cannot believe, for He fills immensity; He cannot hope, for He inhabits eternity; but He can *love*.

¶ All the world praises the clever men; the talented originators, the ingenious inventors. They never lack crowns and rewards. But is there not something to be said for the men and women who have simply purity and elevation of character? The man who sends a current of pure air or purifying example through the world's work-field is at least as praiseworthy as the man who supplies its machinery. Some men serve the world by what they are rather than by what they do. Economically, they are cyphers, but as sweeteners of the world's life they are worth more than gold. I have known a few men and women who have done more to make me believe in God and goodness than all the books I ever read. Their names never get into the newspapers, but their sanctity pervades the air like a perfume from the heavenly fields. When they die, they leave no fortune or triumphant record of startling deeds; they leave only the sweet memory of what they were. We felt their healing touch as they passed by, and we are far better men for having known them. And their epitaph is fitly written in such words as these: "He walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."[1]

4. Once more, to walk with God means *progress*. Not only does it mean that progress is being made. That is true. For in the spiritual life as in all life, there is no standing still. But it also signifies that some maturity of religious consciousness has been attained. There is a sense of Divine companionship, of harmony with the higher will; there is a conquest of the life of sense, an at-home-ness in the spiritual life.

[1] J. G. Greenhough.

¶ The conquest of the spiritual over the natural life is not unlike the advancing light of the morning sun. At Grindelwald I remember watching it. At first it only just tipped the very highest of the mountain peaks; gradually the whole peak was in the brilliant light, all the valley still in shadow. But the peak in the light was guarantee that the shadow was doomed. Watch it: inch by inch the shadow is chased down the hill until the lowliest flower in the valley stands bright in the victory of day. At first the sense of God illumines only our best moments—those whitest and highest parts of our life, those mountains of transfiguration where we do not build tabernacles nor remain. Yes, God's light is there, but life is mostly valley still in the shadow. Let us take heart. Let us keep our eye on those shining heights. All the shadows are doomed; it is in the nature of that sun to conquer. "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6).[1]

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea![2]

5. And, last of all, to walk with God means *rest*. For harmony comes through obedience, and obedience always gives rest. There is harmony in music because in music there is no self-will. Music is built on law. Man did not make this law; he has simply discovered it. If he breaks it the music ceases. Each Haydn and Handel is as much bound by it as each amateur. The same is true of man's relation to his every art. Find out its principles, and all the genius of that art is yours. But disobey its principles; try to excel in any other way than by conformity to its nature, and all that art contends against you, and balks you at every step. We cannot change ocean current or tide, but we can build our ship and stretch our sail, and by adapting us to wind and wave we can gain any Liverpool or Queenstown. We cannot conquer lightning. Obedience pulls the sting out of the lightning and makes it harmless. Fire is a bad master, but a good servant. So is it in the spiritual life. If we obey the law of God we have

[1] T. R. Williams. [2] Oliver Wendell Holmes.

"rest and peace in the beloved." He who is in love with his neighbour, filling the sphere in which God has placed him, has heaven in his heart already. Only through blue in the eye, scientists tell us, can blue out of the eye be seen. Only through C in the ear can C out of the ear be heard. Jerusalem which is above is recognized because that City has already descended from God.

¶ After a hard day's work Bengel retired to rest. Some one heard his prayer: "Blessed Lord, we are on the same good old terms to-night." Then the good man slept. His life was keyed to the divine life. His heart kept time to the pulse of God. He had peace.[1]

II.

Enoch was not.

"He was not; for God took him"; that is, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has it, "he was not found." That expression "he was not found" seems to suggest that he was missed and sought for. Such a man would be missed. No doubt the men of that age knew him well. He was a preacher of righteousness, and had often warned them of a judgment to come. With his departure there was a palpable blank. "He was not found," because God had translated him.

1. Enoch would be missed because his life was a good life. Though a life so full of God, though so constant and so close in the most sacred of communions, yet neither monk's life nor hermit's life was Enoch's. It was a life in all its outward circumstances as ours is, or may be, or should be. It was a life, not in the wilderness in a contemplative solitude, but in the thick and throng of society. Nor was it the select society of a religious community apart from worldly cares and common relationships; it was a life domestic, not monastic—we read of his son Methuselah; and it was after the birth of his son that he walked these noted three hundred years with God. Thus, as regards his own household, this distinguished piety flourished in plain, natural, domestic life. There is nothing exceptional, nothing exotic about it; not a growth within the shelter of costly walls,

[1] M. J. M'Leod.

under fostering heat, with dainty soil and a covering of glass; it was in the open and common air of the world. Indeed, so far from favouring, circumstances were against him. Enoch's age was a deeply corrupt age. It was a God and eternity forgetting world that the patriarch lived in. But he was no silent, unremonstrating witness of the world's corruption and carelessness. He gave his living and lifelong example; and, moreover, he spoke out. The Spirit of that God with whom he walked inspired his speech, and gave his words a heavenly sanction, so that his warnings partook of the nature of prophecy. Like Noah, Enoch was a preacher of righteousness and herald of judgment: "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14, 15).

If I should die to-night,
My friends would call to mind, with loving thought,
Some kindly deed the icy hand had wrought,
Some gentle word the frozen lips had said:
Errands on which the willing feet had sped—
The memory of my selfishness and pride,
My hasty words, would all be put aside,
And so I should be mourned to-night.

Oh, friends, I pray to-night,
Keep not your kisses for my dead, cold brow.
The way is lonely; let me feel them now.
Think gently of me; I am travel worn;
My faltering feet are pierced with many a thorn.
Forgive! O hearts estranged, forgive, I plead!
When dreamless rest is mine, I shall not need
The tenderness for which I long to-night.[1]

2. But this grand revelation did not disclose itself fully and clearly until they lost Enoch. The full significance of a noble life is scarcely ever, perhaps never, realized until we have lost it. "Whence hath this man these mighty works? This carpenter of Nazareth we know; his brothers and sisters live next door to

[1] Robert C. V. Meyers.

us." Ay, He was too near them. They had not yet seen the majesty and the grandeur of Him, and even to His disciples He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." As who should say, "I am too near to you now. I must get further away before you can understand me, and receive the mighty Spirit that shall reveal all things to you." The prophet is only half understood as we rub shoulder to shoulder with him. He talks to us as one of ourselves, and we do not know the mighty spirit that speaks to us and inspires us until he has passed away to the glorious crown of the mighty. And so God glorifies Himself in His servants by their death as well as by their life. It is for Him to choose. It is for Him to determine by which we shall glorify His name the more. For us the one purpose, the one ambition should be, to leave the strongest, deepest impression we can upon the world, to leave it the grandest inspiration possible. If that can be done best by our life, then God grant that we may live. If it can be done best by our death, then death were glorious.

III.

For God took him.

"God took him." In the Epistle to the Hebrews, following the translation of the Septuagint, it is said, "Before his translation he had witness borne to him that he had pleased God well." Does not the writer here imply that God took him, because He was well pleased with him?

¶ A little girl was once talking with another little girl about Enoch. The second little girl had never heard of him, and so the first, who was rich in Bible stories, told her by her mother, made up a version of the story of Enoch which has a very beautiful suggestion in it. Said the little girl to her friend, "God was accustomed to take walks with Enoch, and one day they went further than usual, and God said, 'Enoch, you are a long way from home; better come in and stay with Me'; so he went, and has stayed ever since."

Came the relief. "What, Sentry, ho!
How passed the night through thy long waking?"
"Cold, cheerless, dark,—as may befit
The hour before the dawn is breaking."

"No sight? no sound?" "No; nothing save
The plover from the marshes calling,
And in yon western sky, about
An hour ago, a star was falling."

"A star? There's nothing strange in that."
"No, nothing; but above the thicket
Somehow it seemed to me that God
Somewhere had just relieved a picket."[1]

"God took him" means *Victory*. This is the thought which persists in one's mind after one looks at the picture of Enoch. Remembering the context, and how the biography of Enoch stands out in unique grandeur amongst those of the other men who died, we cannot miss the purpose of the sacred writer. We may say that the Old Testament saints met death with grim resignation, but we cannot say with hope. The desire of escaping death, or "overleaping Sheol," is constantly re-echoed by the Psalmists. Here we have a foreshadowing of that complete victory which can only be won in Christ.

(1) Now, we know that for us death is inevitable. Christ has not taken away death, but He has passed through it.

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.[2]

(2) But Christ has conquered the power of death *by taking away its sting*. St. Paul says, "The sting of death is sin . . . but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 56, 57).

(3) And we must never forget the principle which these words of St. Paul teach us—our share in the conquest. Christ has taken away the sting of death. God will give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us learn our lesson from Enoch: he began his walk with God on earth. "*By faith* Enoch was translated."

¶ I do not know to what extent *The Pilgrim's Progress* is read at the present time, but I never return to it without wonder at

[1] Bret Harte. [2] Richard Baxter.

the genius and insight which it displays. I should be delighted to quote the whole of its wonderful closing scenes, but those who are familiar with them will be grateful to me for two paragraphs which I quote, especially for the last sentence, with its very direct bearing on the value and power of faith in the last crisis, and because of their reference to the subject of this chapter.

"Now I further saw, that betwixt them and the Gate was a River, but there was no Bridge to go over; the River was very deep; at the sight therefore of this River the Pilgrims were much stunned, but the men that went with them, said, You must go through, or you cannot come at the Gate.

"The Pilgrims then began to enquire if there was no other way to the Gate; to which they answered Yes, but there hath not any save two, to wit, *Enoch* and *Elijah*, been permitted to tread that path, since the foundation of the World, nor shall, until the last Trumpet shall sound. The Pilgrims then, especially *Christian*, began to despond in their mind, and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them, by which they might escape the River. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth? they said No; yet tehy could not help them in that case; for, said they, *You shall find it deeper, or shallower, as you believe in the King of the place.*"[1]

Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,
Nothing but bones,
The sad effect of sadder grones:
Thy mouth was open, but thou couldst not sing.

For we consider'd thee as at some six
Or ten years hence,
After the losse of life and sense;
Flesh being turn'd to dust, and bones to sticks.

We lookt on this side of thee, shooting short,
Where we did finde
The shells of fledge-souls left behinde;
Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort.

But since our Saviour's death did put some bloud
Into thy face,
Thou art grown fair and full of grace,
Much in request, much sought for, as a good.

[1] A. S. Peake, *The Heroes and Martyrs of Faith*, 45.

For we do now behold thee gay and glad,
As at doom's-day,
When souls shall wear their new aray,
And all thy bones with beautie shall be clad.

Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
Half that we have
Unto an honest faithfull grave,
Making our pillows either down or dust.[1]

[1] George Herbert.

The Rainbow.

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THE RAINBOW.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.—Gen. ix. 13.

THE Flood was a judgment. The record of it is "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." When sin reaches a certain point, it demands the interposition of God. It is so in individual life. "God is provoked every day." He is long-suffering and of great pity. He gives a thousand chances. He calls and calls again. He reproves gently. He rebukes sternly. He chastens tenderly. He smites severely. Every sinful career is marked by such gradations of discipline. At last the cup is full. Long trifled with, "God is not mocked"; and he who would not have Him for his Father must at last know Him as his Judge. It is so with individual lives, and it is so with the life of communities, and of the world.

But the record of judgment passes into a record of mercy. Like all God's judgments, it was tempered with mercy. Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar, then the Lord "smelled a sweet savour, and said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And therefore God formed a covenant with Noah, making the rainbow the visible sign of it: "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living thing of all flesh."

Still young and fine! but what is still in view
We slight as old and soil'd, though fresh and new.
How bright wert thou, when *Shem's* admiring eye
Thy burnisht, flaming *Arch* did first descry!
When *Terah, Nahor, Haran, Abram, Lot,*
The youthful world's gray fathers in one knot,
Did with intentive looks watch every hour
For thy new light, and trembled at each shower!
When thou dost shine darkness looks white and fair,
Storms turn to Musick, clouds to smiles and air,
Rain gently spends his honey-drops, and pours
Balm on the cleft earth, milk on grass and flowers.
Bright pledge of peace and sun-shine! the sure tye
Of thy Lord's hand, the object of His eye!
When I behold thee, though my light be dim,
Distant, and low, I can in thine see Him,
Who looks upon thee from His glorious throne,
And mindes the Covenant 'twixt *All* and *One*.[1]

I.

The Rainbow.

1. What is it that makes the rainbow? You must have a cloud or rain, and you must have light. Now, every drop of rain is a little prism. The prism divides the pure ray of light into its several parts. You know that if you mix all the colours together you get what we call white. And if you were to mix together all the colours that are in the rainbow, that is to reunite them, so that they blended together perfectly, you would have the pure ray of light. All those hues are only different parts of the pure white ray. And so whenever you see one of those colours appear through the prism, you may depend upon it, it is because the prism has divided the pure ray of light, and has let you have only a portion of it.

¶ The rainbow does in another way what the flower does in the garden. It is another way, but with a similar result. You have a beautiful rose, it may be, in your garden; how charming it is in scent and colour! Well, what does that rose do? It takes in the light of the sun. Yes, but not all of it: it takes certain hues of that light; and what it does not take in, it gives

[1] Henry Vaughan.

back again. Now that which makes it beautiful is not what it takes in, but what it reflects back again. So that the flower is beautiful because it is not selfish enough to take to itself all the light of the sun that descends upon it. The prism is in that respect even more self-denying than the flower, because it does not take any colour to itself, but sends all the colours forth at different angles; and of these one colour or more reaches your eye.[1]

¶ I find the explanations of science very interesting, and I do not find that they necessarily destroy the realities of faith. My rainbow is not less beautiful to me when I have learned how it is formed, nor need it tell me less of God. May it not indeed tell me more? Thomas Hood's lines—

I remember, I remember
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy,

have a pathos which we all feel, and yet may we not urge that they are based on a misconception? Do not I now know heaven to be nearer, not farther off, than I thought it was when a boy? Surely it is now nearer to me than the fir-tops!

I grieve not that ripe Knowledge takes away
The charm that Nature to my childhood wore,
For, with that insight, cometh, day by day,
A greater bliss than wonder was before.[2]

2. The business of science is to observe and to experiment, to understand and to explain, not to go into raptures; and she finds matter to observe in the clods as in the clouds, in the freckled skin of a toad as in the cheek of the fairest of Eve's daughters. She ignores my feeling of the beauty of the rainbow. To her the purest blues and the softest rose-tints are simply examples of decomposed light, incomplete light. It is the colourless—containing all colour—that is complete, the sunlight that is ever and everywhere streaming upon and into our life. And may I

[1] D. Davies. [2] A. J. Bamford.

not welcome this fact and gather comfort from it? So gracious has God ever been that I will not forthwith assume that He could not appoint as His token what may, in a sense, be termed imperfect. He manifests Himself in ways adapted to our receptive powers, and if our attention is more readily arrested by the more exceptional than by the more usual, He may graciously make the more exceptional His sign. But how comfortable a thought that it is the imperfect that is exceptional and the complete that is common! The decomposed light is seen under certain special conditions; the perfect light is ever being poured upon our daily tasks.

¶ Quite recently I happened to pass through one of the most crowded parts of London, when, of a sudden, a rainbow of wondrously intense colour and of unusually perfect form became visible, and changed the whole prosaic scene. It was marvellous to see little knots of busy people, their eager movement arrested, their worldly preoccupations forgotten for the moment, standing in admiration before the gracious apparition. The rainbow lingered but for a brief space, and then slowly faded away. But it remained long enough to tinge with a Divine splendour the homely face of the city, to cheer many a heart with a vision of rare beauty, nay, to create the thought that God does not abandon any part of His world, or wholly sever the bonds of love that link Him to His human children.[1]

¶ Poor Thomas Carlyle, dyspeptic and morose, once looked up at the stars and said, with a growl, "It is a sad sight!" But a little girl looked up at the same sight and said, "Mamma, if the wrong side of heaven is so fine, how very beautiful the right side must be!"[2]

3. The rainbow is chiefly suggestive of thoughts either (1) of mystery or (2) of joy and sorrow.

(1) *Mystery.*—There is no more striking illustration of the vast difference between the religion of the Bible and that of the ancient pagan world than is afforded by their respective explanations of the rainbow. A phenomenon so remarkable would naturally excite the wonder and curiosity of primeval man. Its mystic beauty, the rarity of its appearance, the fact that it had the heavens for its scene, almost inevitably invested it with a supernatural significance. The old mythology, as we know,

[1] Morris Joseph. [2] L. A. Banks.

discerned a god in every wonder of Nature; and therefore it is not surprising to find that for the ancient Greeks the rainbow was the visible representative of a golden-winged maiden who attended the Lord and Mistress of Heaven, and carried their messages to mortals. According to one account, Iris is actually changed into the beautiful rainbow as a reward for her services; according to another, the rainbow is but the glittering ladder by which she descends from the sky to do her errands on earth. Now, contrast this myth, graceful, yet lacking the true religious spirit, with the interpretation of the rainbow given in Genesis. Here the phenomenon is made to tell a story of the Divine love for all the world—a story which breathes comfort into every heart that opens to receive its message.

¶ Rude and distant tribes agree in the conception of the Rainbow as a living monster. A New Zealand myth, describing the battle of the Tempest against the Forest, tells how the Rainbow arose and placed his mouth close to Tane-ma-huta, the Father of Trees, and continued to assault him till his trunk was snapt in two, and his broken branches strewed the ground. It is not only in mere nature-myth like this, but in actual awe-struck belief and terror, that the idea of the live Rainbow is worked out. The Karens of Burma say it is a spirit or demon. "The Rainbow can devour men. . . . When it devours a person, he dies a sudden or violent death. All persons that die badly, by falls, by drowning, or by wild beasts, die because the Rainbow has devoured their ka-la, or spirit. On devouring persons it becomes thirsty and comes down to drink, when it is seen in the sky drinking water. Therefore when people see the Rainbow, they say, "The Rainbow has come to drink water: look out, some one or other will die violently by an evil death." If children are playing, their parents will say to them, "The Rainbow has come down to drink: play no more, lest some accident should happen to you." And after the Rainbow has been seen, if any fatal accident happens to any one, it is said the Rainbow has devoured him. The Zulu ideas correspond in a curious way with these. The Rainbow lives with a snake, that is, where it is there is also a snake; or it is like a sheep, and dwells in a pool. When it touches the earth, it is drinking at a pool. Men are afraid to wash in a large pool; they say there is a Rainbow in it, and if a man goes in, it catches and eats him. The Rainbow, coming out of a river or pool, and resting on the ground, poisons men whom it meets, affecting them with eruptions. Men say, "The Rainbow is disease. If it

rests on a man, something will happen to him." Lastly, in Dahome, Danh the Heavenly Snake, which makes the Popo beads and confers wealth on man, is the Rainbow.[1]

Suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud-barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West; while, bare and breathless,
North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
Sprang across them and stood steady.
'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white,—
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequence,
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

He was there.
He himself with his human air.[2]

(2) *Sorrow and Joy.*—The devastating waters, concerning which God has made with men His covenant of mercy, are the waters of sorrow. These, too, have their bounds set them by the Divine hand. To them the fiat goes forth: thus far and no

[1] E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i. 293.
[2] Browning, *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*, vi.

farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. The torrent of affliction may swell and rise, and toss the heart on its heaving bosom; but God sits above the flood, enthroned for ever, and under His restraining hand it is not suffered to overflow or to deal utter ruin. This is the message of the rainbow—that smile set in the still frowning heavens. It is the message echoed by the Psalmist's confession: "God hath chastened me very sore; but he hath not given me over unto death."

The rainbow is a child of the storm; and it is very beautiful. It springs out of the conflict between light and darkness; it is caused by the sun of heaven shining upon the fast-dripping tears of earth. It tells, and will always tell, that nothing *very* beautiful ever comes to pass in human life, except there be sorrow. It tells, and will always tell, that sorrow *alone* cannot give birth to this beauty of human life and character. It needs the fast-falling tears of sorrow and sadness below; but it needs also the sunshine, the light, and the glory, from heaven above. People are always wondering *why* there should be sorrow and suffering; *why* human tears should flow so freely. There really is not any answer but what the rainbow gives, or at least suggests. Say what you like; be as impatient of suffering as you will; you will yet have to acknowledge, as a fact, that in human character there is hardly anything very beautiful, very attractive, but it has suffering for a necessary condition; suffering lighted up by love.

Through gloom and shadow look we
On beyond the years;
The soul would have no rainbow
Had the eyes no tears.

¶ We are like him of whom the poet sings—

Resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up thro' all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul.

We hear of those upon whom there has fallen some sorrow which seems calculated to destroy all the worth of life. "He will never be the same man; she will never be the same woman

again"—so we exclaim. And yet, though the stricken ones reel under the blow, they do not fall, or if they fall they rise again. Some secret well-spring within is opened, and pours forth its healing stream.[1]

¶ An old couple, who greatly glorified God by their glad lives, were asked: "And have you never any clouds?" "Clouds!" said the old woman, "Clouds! Why, yes indeed, else where would all the blessed showers come from?"[2]

¶ A friend of mine yesterday, when he was told there was a rainbow, looked for it in the direction of the sun. He evidently did not know better. God never puts rainbows in the direction of the light. There is no need of them so long as you can see the sun shining as gloriously as it did yesterday afternoon. It is when you have to look at the cloud that you want a rainbow. Thus you will always find that if the sun is in the east the rainbow is in the west. Hence the old saying—

The rainbow in the morning
Is the shepherd's warning;
The rainbow at night
Is the shepherd's delight.[3]

II.

The Rainbow as a Sign.

i. Symbols.

In times when contracts were not reduced to writing, it was customary, on the occasion of solemn vows, promises, and other "covenant" transactions, to appoint a sign, that the parties might at the proper time be reminded of the covenant, and a breach of its observance be averted.

It has been said that a "sign is a thing which, over and above the impression which it makes upon the senses, causes something else to come into the mind." Anything, therefore, can be taken as a sign: *e.g.* a stone which has in itself no meaning or value, may be used as marking the boundary of a field. Not such is this sign. There is a principle here the same as that in those parables which take some object in nature or some fact in the physical world to symbolize the spiritual truth or fact, and which are properly called symbolic parables. It is

[1] M. Joseph. [2] H. S. Dyer. [3] D. Davies.

such a principle that gives the wonderful comfort found in the 125th Psalm. This rainbow had a fitness for the purpose to which it was applied, for after the appearance of an entire rainbow, as a rule no rain of long duration follows; and the darker the background the more bright does it appear. As such a sign doubtless Noah already knew it. A harbinger of the cessation of a storm was a fitting symbol of the close of that flood which was never to be repeated. The beautiful object which already had a natural adaptation to its purpose "God consecrated as the sign of His love and witness of His promise."

¶ Have not I myself known five hundred living soldiers sabred into crows'-meat for a piece of glazed cotton, which they called their Flag; which, had you sold it at any market-cross, would not have brought above three groschen? Did not the whole Hungarian nation rise, like some tumultuous moon-stirred Atlantic, when Kaiser Joseph pocketed their Iron Crown; an implement, as was sagaciously observed, in size and commercial value little differing from a horse-shoe? It is in and through *Symbols* that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being: those ages, moreover, are accounted the noblest which can the best recognize symbolical worth, and prize it the highest. For is not a Symbol ever, to him who has eyes for it, some dimmer or clearer revelation of the Godlike?[1]

¶ Nature everywhere bears the touch of God. The vast universe is a collection of tokens; the whole system of worlds is a revelation of Divine covenants which the invisible God desires to publish. There are hours when one feels this and sings—

> O earth! thou hast not any wind which blows,
> That is not music; every reed of thine,
> Pressed rightly, flows with aromatic wine,
> And every humble hedge-row flower that grows,
> And every little brown bird that doth sing,
> Hath something greater than itself, and bears
> A living word to every living thing.
> Albeit it holds its message unawares.
> All shapes and sounds have something which
> Is not of them; a spirit broods amidst the grass;
> Vague outlines of the everlasting thought
> Lie in the melting shadows as they pass;

[1] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. 3

The touch of an Eternal Presence thrills
The fringes of the sunsets and the hills.
Sometimes (we know not how, nor why, nor whence)
The twitter of the swallow 'neath the eaves,
The shimmer of the light among the leaves,
Will strike up through the thick roots of our sense
And show us things which seers and sages saw
In the green earth's gray dawn; something doth stir
Like organ-rhymes within us and doth awe
Our pulses into listening, and confer
Burdens of being on us; and we ache
With weights of revelations; and our ears
Hear voices from the Infinite that take
The hushed soul captive.

¶ Very beautiful is this idea of God giving us something to look at, in order to keep our faith steady. He knows that we need pictures, and rests, and voices, and signs, and these He has well supplied. We might have forgotten the *word*, but we cannot fail to see the *bow*; every child sees it, and exclaims at the sight with glad surprise. If any one would tell the child the sweet meaning of the bow, it might move his soul to a still higher ecstasy! And so with all other things God has given us as signs and tokens: the sacred Book, the water of Baptism, the bread and wine, the quiet Sabbath, the house of prayer;—all these have deeper meanings than are written in their names; search for those meanings, keep them, and you will be rich.[1]

ii. A Token of a Covenant.

1. The covenant is that there shall not be any more a flood to destroy the earth, and the token of the covenant is the bow in the cloud. But was there not a rainbow before there was a flood? Of course there was. You do not suppose that the rainbow was made on purpose? There were rainbows, it may be, thousands of ages before man was created, certainly from the time that the sun and the rain first knew each other. But old forms may be put to new uses. Physical objects may be clothed with moral meanings. The stars in heaven and the sand by the seashore may come to be to Abraham as a family register. One day common bread may be turned into sacra-

[1] Joseph Parker.

mental food, and ordinary wine may become as the blood of atonement! The rainbow which was once nothing but a thing of evanescent beauty, created by the sun and the rain, henceforward became the token of a covenant and was sacred as a revelation from heaven. When you lived in a rich English county the song of the lark was nothing to you, it was so familiar; you had heard the dinning trill of a hundred larks in the morning air; but when you went out to the far-away colony, and for years did not hear the voice of a single home bird, you suddenly caught the note of a lark just brought to the land, and the tears of boyhood streamed down your cheeks as you listened to the little messenger from home. To hear it was like hearing a gospel. From that day the lark was to you as the token of a covenant!

¶ In speaking to Noah God did not then create the bow; He turned it into the sign of a holy bond. The fear is that we may have the bond and not the oath. We may see physical causes producing physical effects, and yet may see no moral signification passing through the common scenery of earth and sky. Cultivate the spirit of moral interpretation if you would be wise and restful; then the rainbow will keep away the flood; the fowls of the air will save you from anxiety; and the lilies of the field will give you an assurance of tender care. Why, everything is yours! The daisy you trod upon just now was telling you that if God so clothe the grass of the field He will much more clothe the child that bears His own image.[1]

2. The phenomenon has actually no existence unless there is an eye to see it. Not that the eye in any sense designed or can create it, for there must be the raindrops and the sun, things altogether outside of, and separate from, the beholder, before it can come within the sphere of possible existence; but when it has come into that sphere, then it must, if we may say so, remain absolutely non-existent until it is brought into contact by those wonderful processes, which it needs a scientific pen to describe, with the organs which convey the perception to the brain. Now, this is a very close and a very complete type of what we may understand to have taken place immediately after the deluge in the case of the same phenomenon. It may be said to have then come into existence for the first time; but how? In its

[1] Joseph Parker.

higher character of a token, of a covenant between God and man. It was then made, and it then became capable of being seen in that view by the eye of faith, and it would need the eye of faith so to see it—that is, in the same sense; it would need the eye of faith to bring it into being as the token of a covenant between God and man. The eye of faith had not to create it in that character. To suppose that would be to confound between faith and imagination. Its creation was altogether God's, entirely outside of, and separate from, any action, faculties, or powers that man could bring to bear upon it. Neither the rain nor the sunshine, nor the background of cloud whereon to paint the image, was in any way directly or indirectly produced by hand of man or controllable by the will of man; but still, until man looked upon it, not only with a seeing eye but also with a believing spirit, its existence as the token of the covenant was no more capable of proof than is the presence of Christ in any church at any moment.

¶ It is a quaint idea of the Rabbins that in an age conspicuous for righteousness the rainbow is not visible; the virtuous, they say, are a sufficient sign that God remembers His covenant. And truly it is man's mercy to man that is the most eloquent witness of the Divine love. Every pang assuaged by human agency, every soothing, encouraging word that is spoken to still the complaining, to strengthen the despairing, spirit, every deed of true charity, every grasp of a friend's hand, every ray of light that falls upon our life from the soul of our beloved, is a manifestation of God's mercy. Those virtues of men and women, by the exercise of which they bless one another, are as truly God's angels as are the tranquillity and the strength that will sometimes mysteriously find their way into our disquieted hearts, coming we know not whence.[1]

3. What God did for Noah and his sons was just to take the old familiar rainbow, which was and is merely one of the occasional effects of the unchanging laws of nature—and to make it *His* bow: to make it a visible symbol, a painted sacrament, of His personal faithfulness and love. That is the great law which runs through *all* sacraments. No sacramental thing is ever new as far as its outward form and material are concerned. Our Saviour made His own two great sacraments of grace out of the very

[1] Morris Joseph.

simplest and commonest and most familiar of all actions—the pouring of clean water over the body; the partaking together of bread and wine, themselves the most ordinary and universal articles of diet in His country. And He made them effectual signs and symbols of a grace which is stronger than sin, of a love which is stronger than death. Or look again at *marriage*, which is a sacrament of nature common to the whole human race, coming down to us from the Garden of Eden. On its natural side, its historical side, it is nothing but that instinct of "pairing" which human animals share with all other animals. On its supernatural side, God has chosen it from the first to be a "great mystery." It is a sacrament of love and grace, so effectual that out of it all the progress of mankind in refinement and in civilization has sprung; so profound, that in it has been foreshadowed and represented all along that mystical union between Christ and His Church, by which *we* also live.

4. For what purpose then was the bow set in the cloud? The great purpose was to be a witness to God's *Faithfulness*. The God which the Book of Genesis goes on revealing and unveiling to us more and more is a God in whom men may *trust*. The heathen could not trust their gods. The Bible tells men of a God whom they can trust. That is just the difference between the Bible and all other books in the world. But what a difference! Difference enough to make us say, "Sooner that every other book in the world were lost, and the Bible preserved, than that we should lose the Bible, and with the Bible lose faith in God."

In Calvary's awful scene, we behold the Divine Faithfulness. Clouds of sin have risen from the earth; a shoreless ocean of despair has covered the life of man; but God—the Faithful God, the Covenant-keeping God, the God who remembers that man is His child, and that in his very constitution and life He has left pledges and intimations that help him to look heavenward from some ark of hope—He has not forgotten, He is keeping His word of grace, and the clouds are shot through and through with the power of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. Sin is retreating like the flood, and peace, "My peace," as Christ says, hangs like a rainbow above the cross of Jesus and the life of man.

Not seldom, clad in radiant vest,
Deceitfully goes forth the Morn;
Not seldom Evening in the west
Sinks smilingly forsworn.

The smoothest seas will sometimes prove,
To the confiding Bark, untrue;
And, if she trust the stars above,
They can be treacherous too.

But thou art true, incarnate Lord,
Who didst vouchsafe for man to die;
Thy smile is sure, thy plighted word
No change can falsify!

I bent before thy gracious throne,
And asked for peace on suppliant knee;
And peace was given,—nor peace alone,
But faith sublimed to ecstasy![1]

[1] Wordsworth.

The Proving of Abraham.

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THE PROVING OF ABRAHAM.

And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.—Gen. xxii. 1, 2.

FEW scenes in the whole compass of the Bible are more familiar than the sacrifice of Isaac. We knew the charm of it when we were children, and as we recur to it, time and again, amid the deepening experience of the years, we find that the story has not lost the power and beauty that so arrested us in bygone days. This indeed is one of the wonders of God's Word, that we never leave it behind us as we travel. With all our growth through activity and sorrow, it grows in richness of interpretation. There are books which we very speedily outstrip; we read them, and we lay them aside for a period, and then we come back to them and find them thin and inadequate. But with all our growth, the Bible seems to grow; coming back to it we do not find it empty; rather with the increasing knowledge of the years, and the crosses and burdens they inevitably bring, new depths of Divine help and wisdom open themselves before us in God's Word. It is peculiarly so with such a passage as this. We can never exhaust its spiritual significance. To our childish ears it is a delightful story; it appeals as powerfully as any fairy-tale; but gradually we come to see beneath the surface, and to discern the mind of God within the picture, until at last we reach the sweet assurance that underneath are the everlasting arms.

¶ Looking at the whole chapter as we should at any merely human composition, we must admit that for profound pathos, for tragic force of description, it has never been surpassed. "Each time that we hear it," says St. Augustine, "it thrills us afresh." Compare it even with that exquisitely touching passage in the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus, which describes in words of such

wonderful beauty the anguish of the father constrained to sacrifice his child, and it will not suffer by the comparison. Listen to the brief dialogue: "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" "My son, God will provide himself the lamb for the burnt-offering." The heart's deepest grief was never more eloquently portrayed. No sobs, no tears, no words telling of the struggle within. The anguish lies too deep for utterance. The sculptor, when he would express a grief that he could not express, bowed and veiled the face of the mourner; and the veiling of the agony here is in fact its most pathetic expression.[1]

It is most important that this great text should be approached from the right side. There is a moral difficulty in it—God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son—which arrests the attention so strongly that it usually occupies the mind almost entirely. Accordingly the common title is "the Sacrifice of Isaac." But the subject is the testing or proving of faith; the sacrifice of Isaac being the special manner in which, for Abraham, faith was tested. If we begin with the proving of faith we shall come to the sacrifice of Isaac when we have understood the reason for it. It will then fall into its proper place, and we shall be able to see the moral difficulty in the light of an eternal truth.

I.

The Proving of Faith.

1. First of all, take the general statement that *Faith needs to be tried or proved.* Ewald says: "That only is a spiritual and therefore true and abiding blessing which we are able to make our own in the strife and wrestling of a faithful spirit." That is to say, God's gifts are not in the best sense our own till we have been taught by experience that they continue to be His still. It may even be questioned whether in the unthreatened secure enjoyment of a great joy, there does not always mingle some dash of sin. It may be doubted whether a hot trial does not always find its occasion in some moral need of the tried soul. At all events, as Augustine reminds us, there is no way to self-knowledge but through trial, through what he calls "some kind of

[1] J. J. S. Perowne.

experimental and not merely verbal self-interrogation." In other words, God's stern providence must step in to test the latent capabilities of the soul. No scrutiny of our own, however honest, will ascertain what is really in us. When He takes in hand to try us, because He loves us, it is that He may discover, not to Himself who sees all hearts, but to us and to our brethren, that which His grace has planted deep within. Moreover, He designs, by lending to our unfledged virtue scope and a call to exercise itself, to train its strength of wing for bolder flights to follow.

False gold says to true gold every moment,
"Wherein, brother, am I less than you?"
True gold in reply but maketh comment,
"Wait, O brother, till the touch-stone come in view."[1]

2. Not only does Faith need to be tried but *Faith needs to be tried all through life.* And trials do not become lighter as we go on. The text says, "And it came to pass, *after these things*, that God did tempt Abraham." What, no repose? No place of honourable quiet for the "friend of God," full of years? No. There are harder and yet harder trials even to the end. The last of Abraham's trials was the hardest of all to bear. And this is the history of our existence. For the soldier engaged in *this* world's warfare, there is an honourable asylum for his declining years; but for the soldier of the Cross there is no rest except the grave. Conquer, and fresh trials will be yours, followed by fresh victories. Nay, even Abraham's *last* victory did not guarantee the future.

¶ There is a deep truth contained in the fabled story of old, where a mother, wishing to render her son invulnerable, plunged him into the Styx, but forgot to dip his heel by which she held him. We are baptized in the blood and fire of sorrow that temptation may make us invulnerable; but let us remember that trials will assail us in our most vulnerable part, be it the head, or heart, or heel. Let us therefore give up the idea of any moment of our lives coming when we may lay aside our armour and rest in perfect peace.[2]

3. But *there is usually in our life one trial, one crisis, to which great issues are attached.* As we pass along the path of life there

[1] Jalaluddin Rumi, in *A Little Book of Eastern Wisdom*, 11.
[2] F. W. Robertson.

may come to us, in some form or other, the Divine command, to give up something very dear, because God wills it. And we must learn to do it, to do it cheerfully and willingly, as Abraham did,—to do it without murmuring, with a calm confiding trust in our Father's Love and in His Wisdom, that what He wills is surely good, what He orders must be for the best.

¶ This was not the first time that God had tried Abraham. He had tried him all his life. He tried him when He commanded him to leave his native land. He tried him in suffering him to wander as a stranger in the land given him by promise. He tried him in the peril of Sarah in Egypt and in the peril of Lot in Sodom. He tried him in causing him to wait twenty-five long years before Isaac was born. He tried him severely when He bade him thrust out his son Ishmael from his home. But here it is said in marked phrase that God did try Abraham, because it is the crucial instance of his life, the hardest trial, perhaps, of all history.[1]

If God speak to thee in the summer air,
The cool soft breath thou leanest forth to feel
Upon thy forehead; dost thou feel it God?
Nay, but the wind: and when heart speaks to heart,
And face to face, when friends meet happily,
And all is merry, God is also there;—
But thou perceivest but thy fellow's part;
And when out of the dewy garden green
Some liquid syllables of music strike
A sudden speechless rapture through thy frame,
Is it God's voice that moves thee? Nay, the bird's,—
Who sings to God, and all the world and thee.
But when the sharp strokes flesh and heart run through,
For thee, and not another; only known,
In all the universe, through sense of thine;
Not caught by eye or ear, not felt by touch,
Nor apprehended by the spirit's sight,
But only by the hidden, tortured nerves,
And all their incommunicable pain,—
God speaks Himself to us, as mothers speak
To their own babes, upon the tender flesh
With fond familiar touches close and dear;—
Because He cannot choose a softer way
To make us feel that He Himself is near,
And each apart His own Beloved and Known.[2]

[1] J. J. S. Perowne. [2] Harriet Eleanor Hamilton King.

4. *God sends us no trial, however, whether great or small, without first preparing us.* He "will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). Trials are, therefore, God's vote of confidence in us. Many a trifling event is sent to test us, ere a greater trial is permitted to break on our heads. We are set to climb the lower peaks before being urged to the loftiest summits with their virgin snows; are made to run with footmen before contending with horses; are taught to wade in the shallows before venturing into the swell of the ocean waves. So it is written: "It came to pass *after these things* that God did tempt Abraham."

¶ The trial of faith is the greatest and heaviest of all trials. For faith it is which must conquer in all trials. Therefore, if faith gives way, then the smallest and most trifling temptations can overcome a man. But when faith is sound and true, then all other temptations must yield and be overcome.[1]

5. And now, lastly, let us remember that our experience is that filial obedience on our part has ever been followed by *special tokens of God's approval.* We have something more than mere Hebrew redundancy of language in the promise made to Abraham by the Almighty. Hear how that promise reads. It reads like a river full to overflowing: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Is there a more striking realization of the promise, "I will open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing until there shall not be room enough to receive it"? Have we not ourselves, in appropriate degrees, realized this same overflowing and all-comforting blessing of God, in return for our filial obedience? Have we ever given money to the poor without repayment from the Lord? Have we ever given time to God's cause without the sun and the moon standing still until we had finished the fight, and made up for the loss? "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he

[1] Luther, *Watchwords for the Warfare of Life*, 46.

shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29, 30). Exceeding great and precious are the promises of God! He is able to do very exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

¶ "Unless above himself he can erect himself, how mean a thing is man." He that sets himself with his whole heart on this task, will find at some stage or other of the work, that, like Abraham, he has to offer up his first-born, his dearest possession, his "ruling love,"—whatever that may be. He must actually lift the knife,—not so much to prove his sincerity to God as to himself; for no man who has not thus won assurance of himself can advance surely. But he will find that he has killed a ram, and that his first-born is safe, and exalted by this offering to be the father of a great nation; and he will understand why God called the place in which this sacrifice was offered "The Land of Vision."[1]

I stood and watched my ships go out,
  Each, one by one, unmooring free,
What time the quiet harbour filled
  With flood-tide from the sea.

The first that sailed,—her name was Joy;
  She spread a smooth and ample sail,
And eastward strove, with bending spars,
  Before the singing gale.

Another sailed,—her name was Hope;
  No cargo in her hold she bore,
Thinking to find in western lands
  Of merchandise a store.

The next that sailed,—her name was Love;
  She showed a red flag at the mast,—
A flag as red as blood she showed,
  And she sped south right fast.

The last that sailed,—her name was Faith;
  Slowly she took her passage forth,
Tacked and lay to—at last she steered
  A straight course for the north.

[1] Coventry Patmore.

My gallant ships they sailed away
  Over the shimmering summer sea;
I stood at watch for many a day,
  But only one came back to me.

For Joy was caught by Pirate Pain;
  Hope ran upon a hidden reef;
And Love took fire, and foundered fast
  In 'whelming seas of grief.

Faith comes at last, storm-beat and torn;
  She recompensed me all my loss,
For as a cargo safe she brought
  A Crown, linked to a Cross!

II.

The Proving of the Faith of Abraham.

1. *The word "tempt."*—"God did tempt Abraham" (R.V. "prove"). A better rendering might be, "God did put Abraham to the test." Satan tempts us that he may bring out the evil that is in our hearts; God tries or tests us that He may bring out all the good. In the fiery trial through which the believer is called to pass, ingredients of evil which had counteracted his true development drop away, shrivelled and consumed; whilst latent qualities—produced by grace, but not yet brought into exercise—are called to the front, receive due recognition, and acquire a fixity of position and influence which nothing else could possibly have given them. In the agony of sorrow we say words and assume positions which otherwise we should never have dreamt of, but from which we never again recede. Looking back, we wonder how we dared to do as we did; and yet we are not sorry—because the memory of what we were in that supreme hour is a precious legacy, and a platform from which we take a wider view, and climb to the further heights which beckon us.

¶ "Tempt" in Old English, like the Latan *tentare*, was a neutral word, meaning to test or prove a person, to see whether he would act in a particular way, or whether the character which he bore was well established; in modern English, it has come to mean to entice a person *in order to* do a particular thing, especially some thing that is wrong or sinful. God "tests" or

"proves" man, when He subjects him to a trial to ascertain whether his faith or goodness is real; man is said to "test" or "prove" God, when he acts as if doubting whether His word or promise is true.[1]

2. *The particular form of Abraham's trial.*—The command given by God was fitted as perhaps no other command could have been to purify Abraham's faith. God had been training him from the first to live only by His promise. He called him out of his own land, He promised him another land, but Abraham lived a stranger in it, and was never able to call it his own. He promised him a son in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and for many long years Abraham had lived by that promise, seeing no hope of its fulfilment. At last Isaac was born, and he welcomed him as the child of promise. But years pass on. The child has grown up before him and twined himself about his heart, till at last he has almost forgotten the promise in the child of promise. Isaac, it has been strikingly said, the precious late-won gift, is still for Abraham too exclusively a merely natural blessing, a child like other children, though born of the true mother, Abraham's son only because he has been born to him and been brought up in his house. Pangs, the pangs of a soul wrestling in faith, he has not felt for him since his birth, and yet that is the only spiritual and therefore the only really abiding blessing which we are able to make our own, through the fightings and wrestlings of the believing heart. Therefore, now that in Isaac the supreme blessing has been won, there must also take place the supreme trial of Abraham's faith and obedience.

¶ Abraham was in a special sense the creature of promise. His whole life rested upon the promise; all his hopes centred in and were dependent upon the promise; and the whole object of God's discipline and training seemed to be to isolate him from all else, and to make him hang only on the promise. The promise is all. Is God's promise enough for him? Can he live by that? Can he trust to it with unhesitating reliance in spite of all that seems contrary? Can he trust even when God's own word seems to contradict it? This was the exact nature of Abraham's trial.[2]

3. *Abraham's recognition of it.*—How was Abraham able to recognize as Divine a command to sacrifice his son? We could

[1] S. R. Driver. [2] J. J. S. Perowne.

not so regard such a command: an alleged command of God to sacrifice a child could not be accepted as such; and if it were acted upon, the action would be condemned as a violation of conscience by the whole Christian Church; there had been, it would be said, some hallucination or delusion. The reason is that we live in an age, and under a moral light, in which we could not regard as Divine a command to violate not only our sense of what was morally right, but even our natural instincts of love and affection. It was possible for Abraham so to regard it, because he lived under the mental and moral conditions of an age very different from ours. He lived not only in an age when such sacrifices were common, but also in an age in which the rights of the individual were much less clearly recognized than they are now, when it was still a common thing, for instance, for the family of a criminal to be punished with him, and when also a father's power over his son was far more absolute than it is now. The command would not therefore shock the moral standard to which Abraham was accustomed, as it would shock ours. It would not be out of harmony with what he might suppose could be reasonably demanded by God.

¶ The custom of human sacrifice was widely spread in the ancient world, as it is still among savage or half-civilized tribes, the idea lying at the bottom of it being that the surrender of something of the highest value—and so especially of a relative or a child—to the deity, would have extraordinary efficacy in averting his anger, or gaining his help. The custom was thus practised among the Phœnicians and other neighbours of Israel (cf. 2 Kings iii. 27, xvii. 31); the Carthaginians, Greek writers tell us, in times of grave national danger or calamity, would sacrifice by the hundred the children of their noblest families. Under the later kings, especially Ahaz and Manasseh, the custom found its way into Judah, in spite of its being strenuously forbidden by legislators and condemned by prophets. In view of this prevalence of the practice among Israel's neighbours it is quite possible that Jehovah's claim to the first-born in Israel (Ex. xxii. 29, xiii. 12–15, *al.*) stands in some relation to it; Jehovah took the first-born, but gave it back to its parents upon payment of a redemption price.[1]

4. *The moral difficulty which we feel would not exist for Abraham.* —Living in an age and a country where human sacrifice was

[1] S. R. Driver.

common and approved of, held generally to be the highest mark of devotion, most sacred, most acceptable, it could have been no stumbling-block to him. Now, on the other hand, faith would be shown in refusing any such seeming Divine intimation, however vouched for by the senses. We should regard it, and rightly regard it, as only an hallucination. We should and ought to say, My eyes, my ears may deceive me, a dream may seem like reality, bodily disorganization may cheat my working mind, but that God should bid me slay my child is impossible. No miracle even could attest such a command. If I heard such a voice, if I saw such a miracle, I must only say, being in the full possession of my intellect and my faculties, "I am the victim of some strange hallucination. I believe in God's character as revealed by conscience, as declared to me in Holy Scripture, and I must believe in it against any outward seeming evidence, however strong." And to act in accordance with such a belief would be the proof of our faith, a faith in the unseen against the verdict of bodily sense.

¶ Here we may learn the necessity which is laid upon us of obeying under all circumstances the voice of conscience—of following the promptings of that inner sense of duty, which we all have, if we will only heed it, and which will urge us, from time to time, to do this or to do that—not because it is pleasant, or because it is profitable, but simply because it is right. This is, in fact, what makes a *man*—what makes him essentially different from the brutes that perish—that he has a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, an inward voice which bids him do this and do that, simply because it is right for him to do it. Many brute creatures are very strong and very clever; but to do what is right and true and good belongs not to brutes, it belongs only to men.[1]

III.

The Use of the Proving of Abraham's Faith.

i. Its Use to Abraham.

The command to slay his son was not to Abraham that abrupt, startling, unaccountable command which at first sight it appears. God was leading him, as He leads us all, in the way of His providence. Abraham was living among idolaters; he had been an

[1] J. W. Colenso.

idolater himself. He must often have witnessed the cruel rites, the impure and debasing practices, associated with idol worship. He may not have been free from temptation to fall back into idolatry. On all the high places, by sacred rock, and in sacred grove, fathers shed the blood of their sons and of their daughters to the idols of Canaan, and the land was defiled with blood. When he saw or heard of these awful sacrifices, do we suppose he could see or hear of them unmoved? Do we think they stirred in him no searchings of heart? The triumph of religious faith, however mistaken, over natural affection must surely have moved him to serious and painful reflection. Abraham was a man, as all his history shows, of the tenderest affection—a man who loved his children with no common love. He was also a man, as all his history shows, conspicuous for his faith and obedience to God. Trusting in God, then, and loving Him with all his heart, and feeling, too, that his child was dearer to him than life itself, must he not have asked himself the question, forced upon him by the scenes which he saw around him, "What if my love to God and my love to my child should ever be brought into this painful conflict? Can I give Him my son? Can I give Him, if He asks it, the child who has been the light of my home, the music of my life, the stay and hope of my falling years?" Such questions, we say, must have forced themselves upon Abraham; and we may see in this temptation, this trial, God's answer to such thoughts. God showed His servant what was in his heart; He showed him that he could do all this, that he could do more than the heathen did; for he yielded a sacrifice no less costly, and he yielded it not out of fear, but in simple, unquestioning, childlike obedience.

¶ In contrast with the heathen sacrifices, Abraham's sacrifice, as Philo long ago argued, shines by its moral superiority. "It was not offered," he says, "from any selfish motive, under the compulsion of a tyrant, or through fear of man, from desire of present glory or hope of future renown. He did not offer his son to win a battle, or to avert a famine or a pestilence, or to obtain some coveted gift of the gods. Nor did he give up one child out of many. He was ready to sacrifice his only son, his beloved son, the son of his old age, and he did this simply because God commanded it. His sacrifice in itself went far beyond all heathen sacrifices, as in its motives it infinitely surpassed them. He gave

all that he had, and he gave it not from fear, or from interest, but out of love to God."[1]

¶ The practical test of faith is obedience, and such obedience has to be learned through suffering. But how rarely does it happen that any bystander can guess what tragedies are being enacted in human bosoms! A little excursion by the pious chief and his son for purposes of devotion may have been too ordinary an incident to do more than gently stir the monotony of their pastoral life. Yet few passages in literature carry a deeper pathos than the words which tell how, in the fresh dawn, the aged lord of that camp crept away on foot out of the midst of his retainers' tents, while the cattle, marshalled with merry call and tinkling bell, were going forth in long strings to their several grazing-grounds, and all the landscape grew busy with cheerful stir.[2]

¶ When one asked what was that service of God which pleased Him best, Luther said, "To hear Christ, and be obedient to Him. This is the highest and greatest service of God. Beside this, all is worth nothing. For in heaven He has far better and more beautiful worship and service than we can render. As it was said to Saul, 'To obey is better than to sacrifice.' As also soldiers say in time of war; obedience and keeping to the articles of war—this is victory."

¶ It is recorded of the Emperors of Russia and Austria and the King of Prussia that they were one day discussing the relative unquestioning obedience of their soldiers. Each claimed the palm, of course, for his own soldiers. They agreed to test the matter at once. They were sitting in a room on the second storey in a house, and they determined each to call up a soldier, and to order him to leap out of the window. The Prussian monarch first called his man. "Leap out of that window," he said to him. "Your Majesty, it would kill me," was the reply; and he was sent down. Then an Austrian soldier was called, and the emperor ordered him to leap out of the window. "I will," said the man, "if your Majesty really means it." He was sent down, and the Czar of Russia called his man, and gave him the same order. Without a word the man crossed himself, and started for the window to do it. Of course, he was stopped ere he could leap out—but to all intents and purposes he did make the leap; and whatever there was of agony of feeling connected with that leap, he felt.[3]

ii. Its Use to us.

There are various lessons to be learned from it.

[1] J. J. S. Perowne. [2] J. O. Dykes. [3] A. C. Price.

1. *They that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*—It was designed to reveal to posterity the fitness of this man for the unparalleled honour to which God had summoned him—the honour of entering first into friendly alliance with Heaven, of receiving in the name of the universal Church Heaven's promise of eternal blessing, and of becoming to after ages the exemplar of that trust in God to which it has pleased Him to attach His favour and forgiveness. The issue of that probation was to justify the confidence reposed in Abraham by Abraham's almighty Friend.

2. *True sacrifice is the surrender of the will.*—The sacrifice, though commanded, was not exacted. Abraham's hand was stayed, before the fatal act was completed. This showed, once for all, clearly and unmistakably, that in contrast to what was imagined of the heathen deities worshipped by Israel's neighbours, the God of Israel did not demand human sacrifices of His worshippers. He demanded in reality only the surrender of Abraham's will. Abraham, by his obedience, demonstrated his readiness to part with what was dearest to him, and with something, moreover, on which all his hopes for the future depended; thus his character was "proved," the sincerity of his religion was established, and his devotion to God confirmed and strengthened. It was the supreme trial of his faith; and it triumphed. And so the narrative teaches two great lessons. On the one hand, it teaches the value set by God upon the surrender of self, and obedience; on the other, it demonstrates, by a signal example, the moral superiority of Jehovah's religion over the religions of Israel's neighbours.

¶ We must take the history as a whole, the conclusion as well as the commencement. The sacrifice of Isaac was commanded at first, and forbidden at the end. Had it ended in Abraham's accomplishing the sacrifice, I know not what could have been said; it would have left on the page of Scripture a dark and painful blot. My reply to God's *seeming* to require human sacrifice is the conclusion of this chapter. God says, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." This is the final decree. Thus human sacrifices were *distinctly* forbidden. He *really* required the surrender of the father's will. He *seemed* to demand the sacrifice of life.[1]

[1] F. W. Robertson.

¶ Abraham never needed, himself, to be taught a second time that God does not wish the offering of blood. No Hebrew parent, reading that story in after years, and teaching it to his children, would ever think of pleasing the God of Abraham by offering to Him his first-born son; it became an abomination in Israel to cause children to pass through the fire to Moloch, and the later prophets knew that God loves mercy rather than sacrifice. Though the influence of surrounding idolatries may on rare occasions have led Israel into the tragic sin of offering human sacrifices, the Hebrew law and custom, and the whole providential leading of the people from Abraham's day were against it; and they who would sit in judgment upon this Divine procedure should not be suffered to ignore the decisive fact that the God of Abraham is the God whose course of moral education succeeded in destroying the fatal errors, and saving the vital truth, of sacrifice; and that the beginning of this great, beneficent, providential instruction in the true meaning of sacrifice was the vivid historical object-lesson which God taught Abraham of old, and which Israel has not forgotten to this day.[1]

3. *Give God the first place.*—In that most cruel rite of human sacrifice there is a truth providentially to be cared for, as well as a fearful evil to be abolished. At the heart of it lies this idea, that he who would be a friend of God must love nothing better than God, nor hold back anything which God's service demands. This is the same everlasting law which on the lips of our Lord Jesus found explicit and reiterated utterance: "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me." To disentangle this precious truth from the false and hateful inference which had become involved with it, that the literal slaying of a beloved child could constitute an act of worship pleasing to the Deity, formed beyond question one design of the strange command, "Take now thy son Isaac and offer him up."

¶ Do you say that such an act could not be done now? That is all the more reason why it should have been done;—why it should have been done when it could be done; when the state of evidence admitted of it; when the primitive standard of human rights gave the son to be the property of the father, to be surrendered by him, upon a call, as his own treasure. That idea—that very defective idea of the age—it was, which rendered

[1] Newman Smyth.

possible the very point of the act, the unsurpassable pang of it, the self-inflicted martyrdom of human affection, the death of the son in will, by the father's hand. That idea of the age, therefore, was used to produce that special fruit which it was adapted to produce; the particular great spiritual act of which it supplied the possibility, and which was the splendid flower of this stock.[1]

¶ To refuse sacrifice is to refuse the love that is one aspect of God's being. Love lays down its life unceasingly, but so it transcends time, and conquers death. It is the fulfilling of the law, but its necessity is perfect freedom. And it dies to the finite self; but it has found the universal self, and life eternal.[2]

4. *Redemption is by blood.*—Viewed as a part of the Divine teaching of the world, we find in this history the wisdom of God. We find an answer to that first and deepest of questions that the human heart can ask, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" We do not find it indeed in doctrine or even in words at all. But we do find it in fact. We find it just in that mode of revelation which was best suited to the wants and capacities of those to whom it was addressed. Precisely as we ourselves teach children by pictures, whose meaning, however, they cannot themselves fully understand, so God taught the childhood of the world. Not till the great act had itself been accomplished on Calvary could all its interpretation be given. First came the picture, then, so to speak, the comments on the picture in the mouth of prophets and holy men of old. Then the great fact itself was exhibited; and then from the hallowed lips of the Apostles of the Lord came the eloquent interpretation of the fact. It is one truth throughout. Christ Jesus came "to do the Father's will," and "to give his life a ransom for many"; "by his obedience we are made righteous," "he hath redeemed us by his blood"—what are words like these but the filling in, so to speak, of the fainter lines of that ancient picture?

5. *God spared not His own Son.*—At this point the wonderful story begins to burn inwardly with the fire of prophecy. It grows prophetic of the transcendent sacrifice on the cross, not through ingenious accommodation, or making the most of any accidental surface resemblances, but because at its very core it was an inspiration of the same self-subduing love that inspired

[1] J. B. Mozley, *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*, 60. [2] May Kendall.

and glorified the offering of Golgotha. Abraham's best praise is found in this, that his act can be described in those identical terms which were to be selected by the noblest spokesman of the New Testament Church as the most fitting to describe the supreme act of eternal love: "He spared not his own son." With perfect justice, therefore, has the Christian Church delighted since the beginning of her history to place the sacrifice of Isaac over against the mysterious and adorable sacrifice of her Lord, as its most splendid Old Testament prefiguration.

¶ God's true children must climb their mount of sacrifice. When our own hour shall have come, may we arise forthwith, cleave the wood for the burnt-offering, and go unflinching up the path by which our Heavenly Father shall lead us. So shall the mount of trial become the mount of blessing. We shall have a wider horizon; we shall breathe a purer atmosphere; we shall set our affection more entirely upon things above; we shall walk more closely with God. And so when He asks something very dear to us, let us think not only of Moriah, but of Calvary, where He Himself gave infinitely more than He can ever ask of us.

The dearest offering He can crave
His portion in thy soul to prove,
What is it to the gift He gave,
The only Son of His dear love?

¶ In the moral significance of this history the Jew and the Christian are agreed. Even to the present day the Jew, though he has rejected the true propitiation, sees in the binding of Isaac on the altar a meritorious deed which still pleads on behalf of Israel with God. And whilst the Christian Church prays to God for pardon and blessing on account of the merits and death of Jesus Christ, the Jewish synagogue beseeches Him to have compassion upon it for the sake of the binding of Isaac.

How seemed it to the lad,
As down Moriah's slope they slowly went,
They who had glimpsed th' eternal plan of God?
Behind, the pressure of encircling cords,
The vision of a sacrificial knife,
And dying ashes upon altar stones.
Before, a life that nevermore might be
The glad, free life of sunny-hearted youth—
For he had looked into the face of death.

How seemed it to the lad,
When at the mountain's base they ran to meet
And welcome back the chieftain and his son?
Marked they upon his brow a graver shade?
Within his eyes a stronger, clearer light,
As panoplied with power beyond his own?
And said they, under breath, from man to man,
The while they passed along the homeward way,
"The prince has seen—has seen and talked with God"?

How seemed it to the lad,
When for his mother's greeting low he knelt,
And felt her welcoming kiss upon his cheek?
Oh, did she see, with tender mother sight,
A change had come? And think you that he told
The tale to her? Or did he hold it close,
Too sacred for the common speech of earth,
While dimly seeing through the mist of years,
In one great Sacrifice, the type fulfilled?

The Bartered Birthright.

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THE BARTERED BIRTHRIGHT.

And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.—Gen. xxv. 34.

IN view of the popular misapprehension of the story of Esau and Jacob, and the lessons which that story contains, it is desirable, before approaching the study of it, to draw attention to two things.

1. *The writer's purpose.*—The sacred narrator comments only on the heedlessness with which Esau, for the sake of satisfying an immediate appetite, barters away what would otherwise have been an inalienable right: the modern reader is more impressed by the avarice and selfishness shown by Jacob in taking such a mean advantage of his brother's need. But in truth neither Esau nor Jacob can be called an ideal character. Esau is frank, straightforward, generous, but without depth of character or farsightedness of aim: he is governed by the impulses and desires of the moment; a "profane" person (Heb. xii. 16), *i.e.* unspiritual, a man without love or appreciation of worthier possessions, and heedless of what he is throwing away. Jacob is selfish, scheming, and clutches at every advantage; but he looks beyond the immediate moment; he has ambition and perseverance. Jacob's character is thus a deeper one (in both a good and a bad sense) than Esau's; it contains sound and genuine elements, which, when purified from purely personal and selfish aims, are capable of consecration to the service of God and of being made subservient to carrying out His purposes. No doubt, if history told us more about the Edomites, we should find their national characteristics reflected in Esau, as those of Israel are reflected in Jacob.

2. *The effect of that purpose.*—It is the worst side of both brothers that we see. Were this all that we knew of them, we

might be justified in saying that Jacob's was the worse sin. But we cannot fail to perceive both from this and from their after-history that there was in Jacob a constancy, a determination, a perseverance, which Esau had not; and that, while Esau never looked beyond the present, Jacob had his eye always fixed upon the future. Jacob's faults, of course, cannot for a moment be excused. On the contrary, they were faults deserving the strongest condemnation, and in their own time they brought upon him the severest punishment and shame. Yet even thus early Jacob had become convinced that a great future was in store for him. He saw and appreciated the blessings which belonged to the birthright, and was determined to do all in his power to gain possession of them. But Esau "despised his birthright." His one concern was with the pleasures of the moment. He could not raise his thoughts above the excitement of hunting, or the gratification of his bodily desires. About the future he did not trouble himself. The present was enough for him.

I.

The Birthright.

A crisis arrives in the lives of these two young men which reveals the thoughts of their hearts. Esau comes in hungry from hunting, so hungry that he cannot wait till food is prepared for him. Jacob has a savoury mess of lentil pottage in his hands. Esau greedily clamours for it—you can still hear his greed in his words, "Give me of that red, that red there"; and Jacob seizes the opportunity of making a shrewd bargain with him: "Give me, first of all, thy birthright." Esau replies, "What good shall this birthright do me?" Probably neither of them knew what good it would do. But Jacob is glad of any chance of securing it. Somehow, in the remote future, it may be of use to him; it may help him to the superior place assigned him by the Divine promise; it can hardly fail to yield him some advantage over his brother. And so, though he too is hungry, he balks his appetite to secure a future indefinite good.

1. The first-born enjoyed the "birthright." He succeeded his father as head of the family, and took the largest share of the

property; this was fixed in Deut. xxi. 17 as a "double portion." The right of the first-born, however, was often disturbed, owing to jealousies and quarrels, in the course of Israel's history. The superiority of Jacob over Esau (symbolizing the superiority of Israel over Edom) is described as having been foretold before their birth (xxv. 23), and as brought about by Esau's voluntary surrender of the birthright.

¶ John Bunyan, the inspired dreamer, has told us that he used to hear voices in his hours of temptation whispering to him, "Sell Christ, sell Christ, sell Him for a pin, sell Him for a pin." Of course it was not a pin that tempted him; it was something much bigger and more attractive. Possibly it was money, or some enticing form of pleasure; maybe a companion, a woman, the entreaties of his wife, the imperilled happiness of his children, or escape from persecution and suffering in times when it was not easy to be a Christian. It was a big thing, but his conscience measured it properly; it was only a pin compared with the love and saving power of Christ.[1]

2. Esau, in virtue of being a few minutes older than Jacob, was Isaac's natural heir. He had the rights of primogeniture, and believed that no man could wrest them from him. If ever he parted with them, it could only be by an act of his own free will. Esau's birthright, moreover, meant more than an ordinary first-born son's privilege. He was in a unique position, which afforded him brilliant prospects and golden opportunities. He was born to an inheritance which all the world's wealth would not buy. To be in the patriarchal succession with Abraham and Isaac, to be the recipient of great and precious promises, to be the founder of a holy nation, to be the minister of a covenant by which all the families of the earth were to be blessed—this was within his reach. But Esau despised the birthright. If he had been a religious man, if he had been in the least like his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, he would have treasured up this promise as they did, and would have thought it more valuable than all his earthly possessions. But how different was his behaviour from theirs. "He sold his birthright unto Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and went his way." Well may the holy writer go on to say, "Thus Esau despised his birthright." He could not hold it more

[1] J. G. Greenhough.

cheaply than to part with it, wilfully and knowingly, for a dish of broth.

¶ In *Romola*, in the picture of the crisis of Tito's life—Tito, you remember, the genial nature which was gradually led to crime by daily indulgence in little selfishnesses — George Eliot says: "He hardly knew how the words"—Tito had just denied his father, and the denial was useless as well as criminal—"he hardly knew how the words had come to his lips: there are moments when our passions speak and decide for us, and we seem to stand by and wonder. They carry in them an inspiration of crime, that in one instant does the work of long premeditation." So it happened with Esau.[1]

3. The lost birthright is the one thing that is irretrievable. Esau could never regain it, though he sought it with many tears, though in after life he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, when he found that it could not be recovered. In the history, the Will of God was against Esau's having back his birthright. The will of the dissembling mother was against it. The better and the worst parts of his brother's nature were against it. And so it is always. Neither good men nor bad men consent that a forfeited birthright should be restored. There is not one thing in favour of restoration; nothing at least but the weak wish of decrepit Isaac and the passionate desire of Esau, to have back for nothing, as a gift, that which had once been his by right. He had said, "Where was the good of Knowledge as Knowledge? What was the good of Religion as Religion?" And neither God nor Man attempted to demonstrate to him the truth of what he had known by instinct, but what he hid his eyes from seeing.

Then she took up her burden of life again,
Saying only, "It might have been."

Alas for maiden, alas for Judge,
For rich repiner and household drudge!

God pity them both! and pity us all,
Who vainly the dreams of youth recall.

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: "It might have been!"[2]

[1] G. A. Smith. [2] J. G. Whittier, *Maud Muller*.

¶ There is a very true sense in which what we lose, whether by misuse or by neglect, we cannot regain. How was it with Esau? We cannot forget those verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which, often misunderstood, have given unnecessary pain to many, but which, nevertheless, convey a very clear and decided warning: "looking diligently . . . lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. xii. 15, 17). We must not suppose—it would be contrary to the teaching of all Scripture—that what Esau sought and could not find was repentance. Repentance is always possible, ever open, to those who seek it aright. The words "for he found no place of repentance" should rather, as in the Revised Version, be placed in a parenthesis, and then we see that "it" after "sought" refers not to repentance, but to the blessing, which, by his careless despising of the birthright, Esau had forfeited. He could not regain lost opportunities. He could not, even with those bitter tears of his, wipe out wholly the effects of past sin. He must abide by the consequences of his folly. And so always. Wasted time, misused opportunities, are gone, never to return. The boy, who at school idles away his time, learns too late, as a man, that he cannot make up for the precious hours of youth misspent. The poor slave to intemperance finds, even when most eager to cast the snare from him, that not all his efforts can bring back the fresh innocence and manly energy he had before he fell. It is one of the most awful consequences of sin that, even when the sin itself is repented of, its effects remain, dogging a man's footsteps, seemingly utterly unable to be wholly cast off. As the poet Longfellow puts it—

> Wounds of the soul, though healed, will ache,
> The reddening scars remain, and make
> Confession;
> Lost innocence returns no more;
> We are not what we were before
> Transgression.[1]

II.

Jacob and Esau.

The story of Esau and Jacob suggests a problem which many have found it hard to solve. Our instincts and sympathies all

[1] G. Milligan.

go with the frank daring hunter, and against the timid crafty shepherd. God's sympathies go, or seem to go, the other way; He prefers the subtle shepherd to the bold hunter. That is to say, the Divine Ruler of men appears to place Himself on the side of cowardice, dissimulation, treachery; and to oppose Himself to manliness, veracity, courage. And even if we are quite sure that He must be right, we can hardly make out where and how we are wrong: we cannot vindicate His ways to these two boys and men. The question will rise: "Must not morality suffer, must not our faith in goodness be put in jeopardy, if He who is the very Fountain of truth and righteousness favours the man whom in our conscience we condemn, and condemns the man whom in our conscience we approve?"

¶ I know at least one man of some culture and distinction, a perfectly sane and reasonable man, too, in all other respects, who in his earlier days was so disgusted by this apparent Divine preference for the meaner character of the two that he broke with religion altogether, and has never since been quite reconciled to it.[1]

1. Now the first thing to notice is that even in his selfishness and meanness, Jacob showed his sense of the superior value of things unseen and distant, and his willingness to make a sacrifice to secure them. He sinned; but so did Esau sin in casting away the birthright for a momentary gratification. He sinned; but he sinned, not for a sensual indulgence, but for what he conceived to be a future, and in some sense a spiritual, gain—the main value of the birthright being that it made a man an heir of the Covenant. This, indeed, is the point which we have to mark and to remember above all others, since our whole problem turns upon it, that, even in his wrong-doing, Jacob showed that he could prefer the future to the present, the spiritual to the sensual; while Esau showed no less plainly that he was content to sacrifice the future to certain sensual indulgence, a large remote hope to a small immediate gratification. For here we have a true test of character, a test by which we are accustomed to try our fellows; and a test which compels us to admit, whatever our prejudices may be, that in at least one great vital respect Jacob was by far the better man of the two.

[1] Samuel Cox.

¶ This is the power of all appeal to passion, that it is *present*, with us now, to be had at once. It is clamant, imperious, insistent, demanding to be satiated with what is actually present. It has no use for a far-off good. It wants immediate profit. This is temptation, alluring to the eye, whispering in the ear, plucking by the elbow, offering satisfaction now. Here and now—not hereafter; this thing, that red pottage there—not an ethereal unsubstantial thing like a birthright. What is the good of it if we die? and we are like to die if we do not get this gratification the senses demand. In the infatuation of appetite all else seems small in comparison; the birthright is a poor thing compared with the red pottage.[1]

2. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told expressly why Esau was punished: it was for being a "profane person." "Take heed," it says, "lest there be among you any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Heb. xii. 16). *Profaneness:* that was Esau's sin. What is it that we properly mean by profaneness? It is when people know in their hearts that a thing is holy, and ought to be treated with religious reverence, and yet they treat it as a cheap and ordinary thing. It is different from the sin of Sodom, and in one respect perhaps it is worse: as our Lord Himself seems to intimate, when He says to wicked Capernaum, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you." The sin of Sodom was unbelief: they knew not God, and would not believe what He told them by His messengers. Esau could not say he knew not God. He had been brought up in Isaac's family, which was blessed as Abraham's had been. So far then he was worse than the Sodomites, as he had been better instructed and brought up, and knew more of Him against whom he was sinning.

¶ The profane person is ever the same at heart, but he varies outwardly according to the time and country he lives in. John Earle, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, in his *Micro-Cosmographie* (editio princeps, 1628) gives a description of "the prophane man" of his day: "A prophane man is one that denies God as farre as the Law giues him leaue, that is, onely does not say so in downeright Termes, for so farre he may goe. A man that does the greatest sinnes calmely, and as the ordinary actions of life, and as calmely discourses of it againe. Hee will tell you his

[1] Hugh Black.

businesse is to breake such a Commandement, and the breaking of the Commandement shall tempt him to it. His words are but so many vomitings cast vp to the lothsomnesse of the hearers, onely those of his company loath it not. He will take vpon him with oathes to pelt some tenderer man out of his company, and makes good sport at his conquest o're the Puritan foole. The Scripture supplies him for iests, and hee reades it of purpose to be thus merry. He will prooue you his sin out of the Bible, and then aske if you will not take that Authority. He neuer sees the Church but of purpose to sleepe in it: or when some silly man preaches with whom he means to make sport, and is most iocund in the Church. One that nick-names Clergymen with all the termes of reproach, as *Rat*, *Black-coate*, and the like which he will be sure to keepe vp, and neuer calls them by other. That sing[s] Psalmes when he is drunke, and cryes God mercy in mockerie; for hee must doe it. Hee is one seemes to dare God in all his actions, but indeed would out-dare the opinion of him, which would else turne him desperate: for Atheisme is the refuge of such sinners, whose repentance would bee onely to hang themselues."

3. What did Jacob gain by this offence? Not the fulfilment of the Divine promise; for that would have been fulfilled, had he never sinned. What he gained by his sin was—misery, shame, fear, remorse. As the direct and immediate consequence of his sin, he had to leave his father's tent. Without Esau's courage, he had to face perils before which even Esau might have quailed. He, who was destined to rule, had to serve. The cheat was cheated year after year—by Laban, by his wives, by his children. He had to present himself, a suppliant for life, before the brother he had wronged. He had to witness his daughter's irremediable shame. He was made "to stink" in the nostrils of his neighbours by the craft and ferocity of his sons. His own children repaid on Joseph, his darling, the very wrongs which he himself had inflicted on Esau. As we recall all that he suffered in the course of his long pilgrimage, we no longer wonder to hear him say at the close of it, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life."

¶ Wellhausen says: "The stories about Jacob do not pretend to be moral. The feeling they betray is indeed that of undissembled joy in all the successful tricks of the patriarchal rogue." Now, if ever there was a false statement, that is false. If you

wish to test the matter, read a book written about the time this Book of Genesis was committed to writing, the *Odyssey* of Homer. There we have in Ulysses, a Jacob, an arch-dissembler and accomplished trickster. Like Jacob, he too is a good husband, and his meeting with his son Telemachus after the separation of many years recalls vividly the reunion of Jacob and Joseph. But there the likeness ends. For the story of the lies and tricks of Ulysses is told with gusto. The note of retribution is wholly lacking. Homer's Jacob is a comic figure; but the note of tragedy goes sounding through the Hebrew story. Jacob's tricks and deceits serve him like faithful minions, for the moment, but the moment after, they mutiny. Their numbers swell. They become a troop. They lie in wait for him. They chase him from home. They follow him to his new home. They appear at his marriage. They change the wine into wormwood. As the pages of the story follow each other, we hear the gallop of the avengers, we catch the whoop of their war-cry, "God is not mocked. . . . The soul that sinneth it shall die."

¶ "It is strange," says Miss Wedgwood, "that the judgment on Jacob's perfidy is so constantly forgotten. No professedly moral tale could delineate a more exact requital than that meted out to him." A cup of cold water given to a brother in a brother's name shall not lose its reward; nor shall a mess of pottage, sold to a brother at a price he cannot choose but pay, evade the payment of that tax which law levies on selfishness. "Dust shall be the serpent's meat."

¶ That person who does an atom of good will see it and find its reward; and that person who does an atom of evil will see it and find its reward.[1]

4. Yet when we take the two brothers from first to last, how entirely is the judgment of the Book of Genesis and the judgment of posterity confirmed by the result of the whole. The impulsive hunter vanishes away, light as air: "he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright." The substance, the strength of the Chosen Family, the true inheritance of the promise of Abraham, was interwoven with the very essence of the character of "the upright man dwelling in tents" (Gen. xxv. 27). The word translated "plain" implies a stronger approbation, which the English version has softened, probably from a sense of the difficulty—steady, per-

[1] The Koran.

severing, moving onward with deliberate settled purpose, through years of suffering and of prosperity, of exile and return, of bereavement and recovery. The birthright is always before him. Rachel is won from Laban by hard service, "and the seven years seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her." Isaac, and Rebekah, and Rebekah's nurse, are remembered with a faithful, filial remembrance; Joseph and Benjamin are long and passionately loved with a more than parental affection—bringing down his grey hairs for their sakes "in sorrow to the grave." This is no character to be contemned or scoffed at: if it was encompassed with much infirmity, yet its very complexity demands our reverent attention; in it are bound up, as his double name expresses, not one man, but two; by toil and struggle, Jacob, the Supplanter, is gradually transformed into Israel, the Prince of God; the harsher and baser features are softened and purified away; he looks back over his long career with the fulness of experience and humility. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the Truth which Thou hast shown unto Thy servant." Alone of the Patriarchal family, his end is recorded as invested with the solemnity of warning and of prophetic song. "Gather yourselves together, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." We need not fear to acknowledge that the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac was also the God of Jacob.

¶ To compare the characters of Jacob and Esau in a sentence is difficult, but the contrast is instantly apparent. Let me use an illustration. You have seen a morning of pure and perfect radiance, passing at noon into a black turbulence of wind or tempest, or a haze of dull and heavy gloom. This is a transcript of the life of Esau. You have also seen the troubled day breaking through thick mists, and you have watched, with almost eager interest, the sun battling his way through heavy masses of clouds, shining feebly at first in faint victory, but at last going down in full and peaceful glory. Such is the life of Jacob.[1]

I give you the end of a golden string
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.[2]

[1] **W. J. Dawson**, *The Threshold of Manhood*, 124. [2] William Blake.

5. Three warnings may be given here to the young man of to-day.

(1) *Do not sacrifice your spiritual interests to the appetites of the flesh.*—Such fallen creatures are we, it happens every day that the interests of the soul and the desires of the body are in conflict. Your carnal nature, the animal in you, prompts you to that against which conscience protests, and from which the soul recoils. The flesh pulls you one way, the spirit another.

¶ The morsel may have been sweet; but what a price Esau paid for it! It is easy for us, as we read the story, to cry "Fool!"—but this very folly is being committed every day. It is as old as our fallen humanity. For the sake of a piece of fruit, our first parents sacrificed their whole inheritance, "brought death into this world, and all our woe, with loss of Eden." One look back upon Sodom, and Lot's wife becomes a pillar of salt! Achan covets a Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold, and forfeits his life in consequence. For the sake of a woman's caresses Samson loses his hair, his strength, his sight, his all. David, for the sake of Bathsheba, loses a year's communion with God, and hands his name down with an ugly blot upon it to all posterity. Ahab, coveting a pretty garden, commits murder, and brings down Heaven's judgments on his head. Judas, for a few shillings, betrays his Master.[1]

(2) *Do not sacrifice the future for the present.*—This is just putting the same thing in a different form. Esau saw before him the possibility of an immediate enjoyment; his future interests were distant, and vague, and shadowy. "Ah," he said, "let the future take care of itself; I must have the dainty morsel while I can get it."

¶ Some time ago a ship went down, having struck a hidden reef. Fortunately there was time enough to get the passengers and crew into the boats, which safely held off from the foundering vessel. Just before the last boat started, the captain and mate, having seen that all were safe, stood upon the gangway ready to leave the ship. She was fast sinking—no time to be lost. The mate said to the captain, "I have left my purse below; let me go and get it." "Man," replied the other, "you have no time for that; jump at once." "Just a moment, captain—I can easily get it"; and away the mate rushed below. But in that moment the ship went creeping down. I hear the gurgling flood! The

[1] J. Thain Davidson.

captain has barely time to save himself, when, swirling in the awful vortex, the vessel disappears! By and by the body of the mate was found, and in his stiffened hand was tightly grasped the fatal purse. When the purse was opened, what do you think it contained? Eighteenpence! And for that paltry sum he risked and lost his life.[1]

(3) *Do not sacrifice the warmth of faith for the coldness of scepticism.*—You are advocates of what is known by a much-abused word, "free-thought." You have been reading or hearing specious arguments against Christianity; and you begin to talk of the vital truths of religion as only so many exploded superstitions. You are enjoying the luxury of absolute independence of thought, and for that "morsel of meat" you are selling the birthright of the Christian faith that has been handed down to you from a godly ancestry.

¶ In my university days there was no man for whom I entertained a profounder admiration than Professor George Wilson, of Edinburgh. He was then a man under forty years of age, and destined, I am convinced, had his life been spared, to stand in the very foremost ranks of the scientists of this age. His mind, unlike his body, was of a peculiarly healthy order; he was a worshipper of truth, and an ardent student of nature. In a letter to a well-known and Christian man of science in London, bearing date January 1859, Dr. Wilson wrote (I give you his words at length, for they are very striking): "I rejoice to hear of your success with the young men. God bless you in your work! It is worth all other work, and far beyond all Greek or Roman fame, all literary or scientific triumphs; and yet it is quite compatible with both. Douglas Jerrold's life is most sad to read. In many respects it gave me a far higher estimate of him morally than I had before. But what a pagan outlook! What a heathen view of this world and the next! He might as well have been born in the days of Socrates or Seneca as in these days, for any good Christ's coming apparently did him. There is something unspeakably sad in his life, and it was better than that of many a littérateur. The ferocity of attack on cant and hypocrisy, the girding at religion, which they cannot leave alone; above all, the dreary, meagre, cheerless, formal faith, and the dim and doubtful prospect for the future, are features in that littérateur life most saddening and disheartening. And the men of science, are they better? God forbid that I should slander my brethren in study, men above me in intellect, in capacity, and accomplish-

[1] J. Thain Davidson.

ment. But recently I have come across four of the younger chemists, excellent fellows, of admirable promise and no small performance. I was compelled to enter into some religious conversation with them, and found them creedless, having no 'I believe' for themselves: standing in that maddest of all attitudes—namely, with finger pointed to this religious body and that religious body, expatiating upon their faults, as if at the Day of Judgment it would avail them anything, that the Baptists were bigoted, and the Quakers self-righteous!"[1]

[1] J. Thain Davidson.

Jacob's Vision.

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JACOB'S VISION.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.—Gen. xxviii. 16, 17.

AT two periods of his life Jacob passed through crises of spiritual experience, both of which received symbolical expression, here at Bethel, and later at Peniel. Though, if we take the indications of time literally, it was in his manhood rather than in his youth that he left his father's house from fear of his brother Esau and went into the long exile at Padan-aram, we can scarcely, if we set the narratives side by side, avoid the conclusion that the one is intended to represent the conceptions which may come to youth, immaturity, inexperience, while the other reveals the tried and battered warrior in life's battle, humbled, disappointed, somewhat embittered, and altogether perplexed.

The vision at Bethel is comparatively simple. Jacob had hitherto lived, in the shelter of his father's home, a peaceful and industrious life, with little trouble, danger, or anxiety. But now, not without his own grievous fault, the peace was broken up, and he had become a wanderer. Yet though the wrench may have been great, and he could not have been without apprehension as he set forth on his lonely journey, he could have little actual knowledge of what might lie before him. The optimism of youth was not dead; life had hitherto presented no difficult or insuperable problem; his present undertaking might even lead to unexpected heights of success. So in a desert place, apparently near the Canaanite city of Luz, he lay down to rest, and in the night had a dream.[1]

¶ He was in the central thoroughfare, on the hard backbone of the mountains of Palestine; the ground was strewn with wide

[1] Principal A. Stewart.

sheets of bare rock; here and there stood up isolated fragments like ancient Druidical monuments. On the hard ground he lay down to rest, and in the visions of the night the rough stones formed themselves into a vast staircase, reaching into the depth of the wide and open sky, which, without any interruption of tent or tree, was stretched above the sleeper's head. On the staircase were seen ascending and descending the messengers of God; and from above there came the Divine voice which told the houseless wanderer that, little as he thought it, he had a Protector there and everywhere; that even in this bare and open thoroughfare, in no consecrated grove or cave, the Lord was in this place, though he knew it not. This was Bethel, the House of God, and this was the gate of heaven.[1]

I.

The Presence of the Lord.

And Jacob waked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

1. What Jacob saw in his dream was only the glorified presentment of the thoughts with which his mind had been filled during the day. The ladder, which was the scenic framework of his vision, may have been but the terraced hillside on which he had been gazing ere he fell asleep. All day long, as he had pursued his journey, the glorious expanse of an Oriental sky, one quivering, trembling mass of blue, had been above him, and as he had looked up with wonder and awe into its silent depths, deep questionings had beset him. Then as the twilight stole over the scene, and the stars peeped forth, the sense of mystery deepened, and the questions which had been urging themselves redoubled their solemnity and intensity. And so there rose within his heart strong yearnings; and those yearnings half articulated themselves into prayers. The vision was evidently a surprise. But he would have had no spiritual vision if he had had no spiritual desires. We see in the universe only what our moral earnestness prepares and disposes us to see. It is the pure in heart alone who behold the face of God. The spiritual revelations that we receive are but the sublimation and the fruition of our own spiritual struggles. Had there been none of those yearn-

[1] Dean Stanley.

ings and longings in his heart towards a higher and a worthier existence, Jacob would have seen no angels. He already carried in his heart the key to that heaven through whose opened portals he was permitted to look—"Spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

Thou hast been with me in the dark and cold,
And all the night I thought I was alone;
The chariots of Thy glory round me rolled,
On me attending, yet by me unknown.

Clouds were Thy chariots, and I knew them not;
They came in solemn thunders to my ear;
I thought that far away Thou hadst forgot,—
But Thou wert by my side, and heaven was near.

Why did I murmur underneath the night,
When night was spanned by golden steps to Thee?
Why did I cry disconsolate for light,
When all Thy stars were bending over me?

The darkness of my night has been Thy day;
My stony pillow was Thy ladder's rest;
And all Thine angels watched my couch of clay
To bless the soul, unconscious it was blest.[1]

2. We are apt to cling to the old superstitious notion that in order to draw near to God it is needful to sever ourselves from life's common duties and surroundings. But the Bible lends little favour to any such idea. Jacob's vision was not granted to him at a spot that had previously been accounted holy. He was at Luz—an obscure locality to which he had chanced to come. "He lighted," we read, "upon a certain place." Nor was he engaged in any sacred observances. On the contrary, he was travelling on foot through a desolate region—a very prosaic and secular occupation. But it was in that place, and while he was thus engaged, that God drew near to speak to Jacob.

¶ The same lesson comes again and again from the Divine revelations of which we read in Scripture. Moses was tending his sheep amidst the rocks and furze of Horeb, when God appeared to him in the burning bush and taught him that that mountain-side

[1] G. Matheson, *Sacred Songs*, 53.

was holy ground. The disciples were standing half-naked in their fishing-boat, worn out with the long night's fruitless toil, when they discerned some one standing on the beach; and the disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, "It is the Lord." Saul of Tarsus was riding on horseback through the fierce sunshine of the Syrian noonday, when that brighter light from heaven shone round about him.[1]

When He appoints to meet thee, go thou forth—
    It matters not
If South or North,
    Bleak waste or sunny plot.
Nor think, if haply He thou seek'st be late,
    He does thee wrong.
To stile or gate
    Lean thou thy head, and long!
It may be that to spy thee He is mounting
    Upon a tower,
Or in thy counting
    Thou hast mista'en the hour.
But, if He come not, neither do thou go
    Till Vesper chime,
Belike thou then shalt know
    He hath been with thee all the time.[2]

II.

A Sense of Sin.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place!

1. *Fear was inherent in Jacob's character.*—It spoilt him in his early days, but he had manly stuff in him and he subdued it, and afterwards it was lifted into veneration of God. His present fear was caused partly by the sense of sin, partly by realizing the presence of the Invisible. No one who does not know God can feel himself touched by God without fear. If he feels Him only as a dreadful power the result will be superstition, but if he knows and loves Him the result is veneration. From that hour the love that casts out fear began to stir in Jacob's heart. He began to realize, not an angry Being, but One who loved him and would care for him.

[1] J. C. Lambert. [2] T. E. Brown.

2. *Jacob had sinned grievously.*—He was fresh from an act of shameful deceit, seconded by several deliberate lies, and aggravated by the fact that his victims were his only brother and his aged father, now smitten with blindness and infirmity. Was a man, upon whose soul such sins lay hot and unrepented of, a possible subject for such a revelation of God as we read of in this chapter? Not unless all the laws of man's relation to God were completely disregarded in the case of Jacob. From the very fact that God appeared to the patriarch with this gracious manifestation of Himself and promise of His favour, we conclude that Jacob must have had some contrition for his sin, that he must at that very time have been passing through the painful struggles of an awakened conscience. Jacob had sinned deeply; but he would have been a callous sinner indeed if he had had no pangs of compunction when he heard his father's reproachful voice and his brother's exceeding bitter cry. And now all the afflictions that had befallen him—his enforced flight, his banishment from home, his lonely journey, the dangers by which he was beset—these afflictions had engraven deep upon his mind the solemn lesson that the devil's wages are always very hard, and had worked in him that godly sorrow which leads to true repentance. Jacob, we might say, had been wrestling with God in the secret places of his soul, even as Nathanael had been kneeling before God under the fig tree when Jesus promised that he too, like Jacob, should see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending.

¶ There is nothing that makes us seem farther away from God than *a heartfelt sense of sin and self-abasement.* But it is when a man is in the very depths of self-condemnation that the light of God's countenance breaks upon him like the day-dawn following the night. Look at the Penitential Psalms. What a consciousness of sin is there; what a depth of genuine humiliation! And yet it is just when these psalmists are crying out of the depths that the assurance of Jehovah's pardoning mercy and love springs up within them. For it is when hearts are broken and contrite that the High and Lofty One stoops down to visit them. Contrition and humility are the true foundation-stones of godliness, and the lower these foundations are sunk, the higher will the towers and pinnacles of the Divine Temple rise within the soul. Tennyson has taught us to say that "men may rise on

stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things." And in the gracious counsels of our God there is a blessed provision whereby the very sins of the past, if truly repented of, may become stepping-stones to heaven—another Jacob's Ladder, by which His children are raised above their sin and selfishness up the steep heights of holiness and into the very presence of the Father.[1]

3. If ever a man needed a little merciful handling, this solitary and troubled soul needed it then. God is ever near to the souls that need Him most; and a man never needs Him so much as when he has sinned, for he is never so surely imperilled as then. So, through this man who has sinned, to all men who have sinned this incident speaks, and tells us that God appears in grace to a man who has done wrong, to prevent his doing further wrong, to show that he is not cast off, that from the sin into which he has fallen there is a way to God, and that heavenly influences descend even on the head of the transgressor. Not that his sin is condoned, not that he deserves the bright vision. Who of us would have any but a dark and terrifying vision if we had what we deserve? It is a vision of God's grace that comes to this wanderer—a vision to assure him that God's mercy persists in spite of man's sin, and wills to save him from a further fall.

¶ The thing that we dread is often the thing that brings God near. He is sometimes a theory and His comfort a poem, until darkness and solitude cause the soul to call out for Him. And I am giving the experience of some also when I say it was in the trouble into which sin plunged us that God first became a reality. It was then that we sought, and cried passionately, and found. There comes a shadow that no earthly light can pierce, and into it comes the light of God; and we have to bless the solitude and the darkness and the bitter penalty and consequence, because then, for the first time, God became real and near.[2]

III.

The House of God and the Gate of Heaven.

This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Let us pass at once from the story of Jacob and consider what lessons these words can bring us when they are used of a sacred building, a church. The vision of the patriarch reveals to us

[1] J. C. Lambert. [2] C. Brown.

that the whole earth is the House of God, while particular places are chosen to emphasize the truth that there is now a continuous intercourse between earth and heaven, that already we are living in a spiritual world. Three lessons each Church presses upon us, and our life is hallowed and strengthened by remembering them.

1. *A Church witnesses to the universal presence of God.*—This universal presence of God is a most certain truth; yet for the most part our eyes are holden that we should not know it. We are unable to grasp the fulness of the fact. And therefore God meets our infirmity. In His love He gives us signs. He has been pleased from the earliest times to set His name here and there, in a stone, as at Beth-el, in a tent, in a temple, and now in a Church. Through the visible He helps us to see the invisible. A Church, then, does not bring to us anything new or exceptional. It witnesses to the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal, which is about us on every side. It shows God to us here because He is everywhere. It helps us to see what lies beyond the shadows on which we look. It encourages us to pierce beneath the surface to that which is abiding.

So sometimes comes to soul and sense
The feeling which is evidence
That very near about us lies
The realm of spiritual mysteries.
The sphere of the supernal powers
Impinges on this world of ours.
The low and dark horizon lifts,
To light the scenic terror shifts;
The breath of a diviner air
Blows down the answer of a prayer:—
That all our sorrow, pain, and doubt
A great compassion clasps about,
And law and goodness, love and force,
Are wedded fast beyond divorce.
Then duty leaves to love its task,
The beggar Self forgets to ask;
With smile of trust and folded hands,
The passive soul in waiting stands
To feel, as flowers the sun and dew,
The One true Life its own renew.[1]

[1] J. G. Whittier, *The Meeting.*

2. *A Church witnesses also to the reality of man's intercourse with God.*—It is, like Jacob's Beth-el, "the gate of heaven." And so from very early times the words "Behold a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven" were recited at the consecration of Churches, and the first recorded promise of the Lord gives a permanent force to the vision of the patriarch when He said to the disciples, amazed that He had read the secret thoughts of Nathanael: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." A Church, in other words, answers to the title which was given to the first appointed House of God, "the Tent of Meeting." It is the meeting-place of God with man and of man with God. The thought is overwhelming. We are tempted to cry out with Jacob, when we realize what it means, "How dreadful is this place." We recall the words spoken to Moses, "No man shall see my face and live," or the confession of Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone . . . for mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty." But the incarnation has changed our relation to God. In the Son of Man the glory of God is tempered to our vision. It is true that no man hath seen God at any time: that He dwelleth in light unapproachable, "Whom no man hath seen nor can see," yet we have also for our assurance the Lord's own words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," not indeed seen God as God in His most awful majesty, but God revealed through the love of His Son.

¶ Reviews of Miss Yonge's life, and even of Mr. Keble's, spoke as though their country lives must have been quiet to dullness, or at least that they produced no incidents useful for biographical purposes. To those who at that time were their nearest neighbours, their lives were wonderful examples of the self-controlled vivacity of high spiritual existence. The eyes of our elders were fixed on the holiest realities of Spirit, and in the services of the English Church they found the atmosphere in which they breathed most freely. Theology was to them a thrilling interest, and they moved and spoke and thought with unseen presences round them, not psychical or fancy-spiritual, but as realizing the angels round about the Throne and the solemn awe of the Throne.[1]

3. *A Church assures us that we are even now living in a spiritual order.*—This is implied in the record of the Patriarch's

[1] C. A. E. Moberly, *Dulce Domum*, 7.

Vision. The angels are represented as "ascending and descending." Ascending first: earth, that is man's home, is the habitual scene of their ministry. And again, St. Paul tells us in direct words: "God has made us to sit with Christ in heavenly places." And again we read: "We have come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels in festal assembly . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Heaven is not distant and future, but here and now. And we habitually claim, in our Communion office, fellowship "with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven." Life, in a word, is shown within our Churches under its spiritual aspect in all its critical vicissitudes. Powers of heaven are seen to mingle at each point with faculties of earth. We are impressively reminded of the greatness of life. If life is on one side the vision of God, it is on the other side the welcome of God's gifts that they may be used in His service. It is from first to last a personal Divine companionship. The Church with its services is the sign and pledge of blessings answering to all our need, but then we are ourselves the living sanctuary: we live as knowing that the Lord is with us all the days.

Faith's ladder pales not, Angels yet are found
All beauteous in calm and holy light;
Their silver robes have skirted many a cloud
Thronging the purple night.

Swift from the golden gates they come and go,
And glad fulfil their Master's high behest,
Bringing celestial balms for human woe,
Blessing and being blessed.

And have not we sore need the faith to hold
Of the surrounding of the Angel bands;
Mid all earth's dust to trace their steps of gold,
And feel the uplifting hands?

Ah! yes, I think so, then with firm believing,
With reverence, hail each soul's celestial guest;
Till they shall come, God's final will revealing,
To fold us into rest.[1]

[1] *Lyra Anglicana*, 136 (God's Angels).

Spiritual Wrestling.

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Spiritual Wrestling.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.—Gen. xxxii. 24.

This is one of the strangest stories under which the Bible, in a fashion suitable to the age in which it was written, presents eternal truth to us—strange in itself, strange in its setting, yet charged with deep meaning and full of most consoling instruction for those who have insight to pierce the shell of its Jewish complexion and colouring, and to seize its underlying and essential features.

The narrative is of manifold attraction. The highest poetical interest gathers round that dark wrestling by the rushing brook, while

> The sentinel stars set their watch in the sky.

Our historical interest also is excited: what was it, actually, that touch of God? But the spiritual interest of the scene is the intensest, as we inquire what the conflict signified for Jacob's inmost soul.

Let us take the subject in three parts—

I. The Occasion of the Wrestling.
II. The Nature of the Wrestling.
III. The Result of the Wrestling.

I.

The Occasion of the Wrestling.

1. *The past and the present.*—The time when this occurred was when Jacob was returning from the East to Canaan, in very different circumstances from those in which he left it. He went

out with his staff in his hand; he came back increased to "two bands." He went out alone, with life before him, hopeful perhaps of happiness, and full of aspirations, fresh and eager to run the race of life. He came back an altered and sobered man, with life behind him, with what there was to enjoy of it mainly enjoyed; and, perhaps, the cup did not now seem so sweet as he thought it would be, before he put it to his lips. At all events he had drunk it fully. He had lived a many-sided life. Of sensual enjoyments he might seem to have had his fill; and he was not averse to use the petty passions of others as the means of gratifying his own larger ones. In business he was always fortunate. In those higher things which men's hearts crave, though foiled at first, he was at last victorious.

Thus Jacob had lived a busy, clever, varied life—a keen, competitive, skilful, successful life; and, with the fruits of it now reaped and gathered, he would return to rest in the home of his fathers. It is sweet to dream in a foreign land of the place of one's childhood. Imagination gilds even the sordid hovel of one's birth. We remember but the good; we forget the evil, or change it into good. And so Jacob was using the necromancer's art. The sunshine and shower of his early years he remembered but as sunshine. All the good stood out bright before him, and all the evil had disappeared. His own evil too was forgotten; or, if remembered, it was excused and forbidden to intrude itself. Our imagination of the past retains only the good; but God and conscience keep in reserve the evil. Jacob had not calculated on finding the beginnings of his life so visibly unaltered. Twenty years had passed since he did the evil. Surely the evil must have worked itself out of things long ere now. But it had not. It stood before him now, just as it stood when he fled from it twenty years before—only more formidable, grown in bulk and terror, with greater power to do him hurt, in proportion as he was now more susceptible of hurt. Then it was Esau, seeking Jacob's life; now it is Esau, with four hundred men, seeking, not Jacob's life merely, but all those other lives into which his has been partitioned, and which are dearer to him than his own.

¶ It is a great spiritual crisis in Jacob's life. That life might well be called, with no injustice to Jacob, the History of a Sin. Perhaps it is this very fact that invests it with its enduring

charm. A life like Abraham's, though far from perfect, is yet in many respects so august in its moral greatness, that, while we admire, we are liable to be somewhat discouraged; for, in the contemplation of so serene an altitude of faith, we are ready to say, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." But Jacob, so full of infirmities, and yet so desirous of better things; now overborne by temptation, and now strenuously contending—such a man is very near to us, and we are encouraged to believe that, if he conquered, we may conquer too. But with equal truth might Jacob's life be called the History of a Retribution. Almost from first to last we see retribution following and smiting him, as it winds itself into all the sinuosities of his career. "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. xxxii. 23)—with what relentless severity did this law fulfil itself! And now at the last, when he has escaped from danger after danger, although suffering, withal, so many and sore woes that might not be escaped; and when, perhaps, he had thought the sufferings all ended and the dangers past—now, once more, and more fearfully than ever, his old sin rises up to confront and condemn him, smiting him with all its terrors, as he cries out, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" It is one of those crises in which a whole eternity is compressed into an hour.[1]

I sent back memory, in heedful guise,
To search the records of preceding years;
Home, like the raven to the ark, she flies,
Croaking bad tidings to my trembling ears.
O sun! again that thy retreat was made,
And threw my follies back into the friendly shade![2]

2. *The expected meeting.*—Jacob had been guilty of a great sin at the outset of his career. He had deceived his father, had resorted to treachery to obtain the birthright, and the fact that that which seemed to be Esau's was really his own by promise, though it modifies our judgment, does not alter the sin. But, however much we may understand that what he got in a wrong way was really his own, Esau did not choose so to understand it. Esau from the first had considered himself a deeply injured man, as most men would, and during all these years, Jacob might reasonably expect that Esau had been nursing and cherishing the sense of his injury. Now they were to meet again. Jacob had just received the intelligence of Esau's approach, a meeting was inevit-

[1] T. F. Lockyer. [2] Christopher Smart.

able, and the thought of it was sufficiently disturbing. How did Jacob prepare for the meeting?

(1) *By prayer.* — After receiving the threatening report about Esau Jacob retired to the privacy of his tent, and poured forth the acknowledgment of his trouble and perplexity in the first-recorded words of human prayer. They are words which tell the want and vibrate with the passion of a human heart. "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed to thy servant. . . . Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother."

(2) *By taking thought for his family.*—Jacob, with a characteristic prudence that never forsook him, divided his company into two bands—in the first which would meet Esau he sent those for whom he least cared, so that they might bear the brunt of Esau's attack if he did attack; and so that the second band, composed of those whom he loved most, might be able to escape.

¶ This is remarkable in the mind, that it is steadied by extreme danger, while it is thrown into confusion by a little trouble. The physician's hand, which trembles when an insignificant sore has to be lanced, is steady and firm when an operation that may be fatal has to be performed. A petty encounter worries and excites the great military genius who is serene and master of himself in the thick of the conflict on which the fate of empires hangs. In this greatest trouble of his life, Jacob's mind comes forth with a grandeur and a decisive clearness that are scarcely credible in one habitually crooked, and timid almost to cowardice. He so arranges that, if the stroke fall, it will not fall on all at once; if it smite some, it will spare some, perhaps, and these the dearest. And these dispositions made—made for those for whom he never thought to need to make any such dispositions at all, and while they were ignorant of the menace hanging over them, and though he knows how unavailing all may be—he leaves all in higher hands. But unwittingly this care about others, this greater earnestness for them than ever he had felt for himself, and this entrusting of them more sincerely into God's hands than ever he had yet committed himself, have brought him nearer to God than ever he has yet been, or, perhaps, than he cared to be.[1]

> For now I live a twofold life: my own
> And yet another's; and another heart
> Which beats to mine, makes glad the lonely world
> Where once I lived apart.

[1] A. B. Davidson.

And little lives are mine to keep unstained,
Strange mystic growths, which day by day expand,
Like the flowers they are, and set me in a fair
Perpetual wonderland.[1]

(3) *By solitude.*—"And Jacob was left alone." We can understand that he felt he must be alone before he met with one who recalled to him the bitterest reminiscence of his life. He had, so to speak, to formulate his position towards Esau; to consider his line of defence if he met him as an enemy; to consider how he could meet him at all. It was one of those moments that imperatively demand solitude. The past has to be revisited, the ghosts of old sins have to be faced. In exile they were thrust out of sight; change of scene, new interests, had almost obliterated the sense of his own wrong-doing, but Esau's face will bring it all back again, and Jacob must be alone before he sees him—alone in the still darkness, alone by the silently flowing waters, to shape and to reshape his life, to focus his old self by the new lights which twenty years of living had brought to him. None could share his load—none, not even Rachel, could be with him; he must bear his own burden.

II.

The Nature of the Wrestling.

i. A Spiritual Crisis.

1. It should be observed at the outset that this crisis in the spiritual experience of Jacob took place when he was well advanced in years. Jacob was no longer a young man when he wrestled with the angel in the dark night by the ford of Jabbok. He was the father of many sons, a man of property, a man of experience; above all, he was a man who had long perceived the value of spiritual things, had long attached the highest importance to that Divine promise which had been transmitted to him by his father Isaac, and who had made a solemn vow at Bethel, twenty years before, that the Lord God of Abraham should be his God, and that he would serve Him all the days of his life.

2. There are those who would like to think that the crisis of the religious life is reached at a very early stage of spiritual

[1] Sir Lewis Morris, *Poems*, 68.

experience, and that once passed there are no more grounds for apprehension or fear or care or caution. The story of the wrestling of Jacob teaches a very different lesson. First comes the vision of the ladder—the dream of glory, the sense of Divine protection and security. And then, long afterwards—after many years of service and prayer and worship and endeavour, when Jacob is getting on in years, at the end of much experience and patient trust—there comes the struggle—all alone in the darkness—the struggle that wastes and draws the strength of Jacob, the struggle in which the nature and character of the man are finally declared, and proved and sealed for ever.

¶ Some may think the revelation given to Jacob at Bethel, on his way to Padan-aram, the most interesting event in his history. And to those beginning life it may be. There is an ideal brilliancy in it, attractive and fascinating. But that sombre, stern conflict, beyond the Jordan, in the grey, unromantic days of mid-life, is a profounder study, and there will always be found gathering round it those who know the imperfections of life, and the bright hues of whose early expectations have been toned down by the pale cast of experience.[1]

3. In spiritual matters experience varies. The personal experience of each one of us differs in some respects from that of all others. There is no one rule that applies in every case. With some, the way of life is a way of peace and a path of pleasantness, leading the soul by green pastures and still waters. There are happy, sheltered lives that never know the burden of doubt, uncertainty, and inward distress—never are sifted like wheat with the fan of the Lord, or tried in the refiner's fire of trouble and sorrow—never feel the ache of shame and self-reproach, or the agony of a broken and contrite heart. But there are others for whom the way of life dips into what is dark and painful, and who have to fight their way through much tribulation towards the light of God,—men and women who, from nature and circumstances, from the weakness and defects of their own character, or the faults and mistakes of early days, or a combination of causes which are known only to God, have to win the crown of life, if it is to be won at all, with wrestling and struggling—with a stern, often-renewed, and persistent conflict

[1] A. B. Davidson.

with themselves and the world and the flesh and the devil—a conflict that ends only with life.

As men from men
Do, in the constitution of their souls,
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;
And as we fall by various ways, and sink
One deeper than another, self-condemned,
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame;
So manifold and various are the ways
Of restoration, fashioned to the steps
Of all infirmity, and tending all
To the same point, attainable by all—
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.[1]

ii. The Opponent.

1. Why was Jacob thus mysteriously held back while his household was quietly moving forward in the darkness? What is the meaning, purpose, and use of this opposition to his entrance? The meaning is obvious from the state of mind Jacob was in. He was going forward to meet Esau under the impression that there was no other reason why he should not inherit the land but only his wrath, and pretty confident that by his superior talent, his mother-wit, he could make a tool of this stupid, generous brother of his. And the danger was that, if Jacob's device had succeeded, he would have been confirmed in these impressions, and have believed that he had won the land from Esau, with God's help certainly, but still by his own indomitable pertinacity of purpose and skill in dealing with men. Now, this was not the state of the case at all. Jacob had, by his own deceit, become an exile from the land, had been, in fact, banished for fraud; and though God had confirmed to him the covenant, and promised to him the land, yet Jacob had apparently never come to any such thorough sense of his sin, and entire incompetency to win the birthright for himself, as would have made it possible for him to receive simply as God's gift this land which was valuable only as God's gift. Jacob does not yet seem to have found out the difference between inheriting a thing as God's gift, and inheriting it as the meed of his own prowess. To such a man God cannot give the land; Jacob cannot receive it. He, in short, was about to enter the

[1] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*.

land as Jacob, the supplanter, and that would never do; he was going to win the land from Esau by guile, or as he might; and not to receive it from God. And, therefore, just as he is going to step into it, there lays hold of him, not an armed emissary of his brother, but a far more formidable antagonist.

2. From the first Jacob knows that it is a man that wrestles with him. It is a person—it is with a personal will that he is grappling. But after a time both adversaries stand out more clearly. The morning begins to break, and with the light the spell of the Unseen over the patriarch will break too. The conflict must cease, lest its advantages be lost. The heavenly wrestler seeks to depart. He said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." And Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Ere now there had begun to break upon Jacob's mind some consciousness of the rank of his adversary; and perhaps to complete it He touched the nerve of his thigh and paralysed it. And then the conflict quite changed its nature, from using force, to mere supplication. And here the details supplied by Hosea come in: "He had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him" (xii. 4). God had put out His hand upon him at last, having allowed him to wrestle with Him for a night—a symbol of that obstinate struggle which, in his confident, unsubdued strength of nature, he had been waging against Him all his lifetime. His Spirit cannot always strive with him: some decisive stroke must be put forth upon him, to break him once for all, to touch him in the vital part, that, utterly disabled, he may know whom he has been opposing, and how vain such a conflict is.

¶ We discuss this wonderful event, and take sides as to whether it was a real, outward thing, or only a transaction in Jacob's soul. Some think it important to hold it literal and outward, and unsafe to regard it as mental. It is characteristic of very many of the views for which men fight, that they are excellent things to fight about, because there is no means of deciding them. It is also occasionally a characteristic of them that no interest whatever attaches to their decision, one way of them being quite as good as another. If God presented a real, outward form to Jacob, so that he entered into a physical wrestling with it, it was very wonderful and Divine. If God's Spirit of revelation and holiness so touched the conscience and the memories

of Jacob's heart that the agitated spirit deemed itself wrestling through the body, and did indeed in its own awful agony agitate and dislocate the bodily frame, was it less wonderful or less Divine? The balance of probability perhaps lies on the side of the external reality of Jacob's adversary. Many a time in dreams the whole frame is agitated and wrestles. Men do rise weary after nights of conflict. They rise awestruck and terror-laden. Perhaps it cannot be shown that they have risen with bodily ailments, with sinews wrenched and joints displaced. Rather is the event to be held literal. An Angel entered Abraham's tent. He let His feet be washed;—the same who in after days washed His disciples' feet. He allowed meat to be set before Him;—as in after times He asked, "Children, have ye any meat?" And a *man* He wrestled with Jacob; as now man for ever He wrestles with us all in love, though we oppose Him in earnest.[1]

iii. Victory.

1. Jacob's victory and the victory of the Angel were synonymous. When the Angel conquered Jacob, Jacob won the blessing —and so it always is. When God conquers man, man is victorious over self. Jacob faced his sin and discovered that his controversy was not so much with his brother as with God. It was not Esau's wrath he had to dread so much as God's; for the sin against his brother was in its ultimate ground a sin against God. Can he believe, despite of this consciousness of sin, that God is pacified toward him? And now, when all things seem against him, and God Himself sets Himself as an adversary to him, in this darkest hour, in this night of the soul, of which the actual night during which this conflict found place was but the outward sign, can he lay hold on the promises and still hope and trust and believe? That he can do this, that he is strong to contend, even when God seems to set Himself, and for the time does set Himself, as that adversary, against him, this it is that constitutes Jacob a prince with God, a champion who prevails with Him, and who therefore need not fear but that he shall prevail also with man.

¶ After the loss of his wife, whom he had dearly loved and patiently tended through prolonged and severe affliction, Dr. John Brown wrote: "I have been thinking much lately of Jacob's wrestling with the Angel, finding his weakness and his strength at the same time, and going on through the rest of his life halting

[1] A. B. Davidson.

and rejoicing. I believe this is the one great lesson of life—the being *subdued by God.* If this is done all else is subdued and won."[1]

2. "*Until the breaking of the day.*"—That night which was the eve of Jacob's meeting with Esau had seen a fierce struggle, but peace came with the break of day. Jacob was at peace with himself and God, and in a very short while he would know that he was at peace with Esau.

¶ How naturally dawn wakes thoughts of victory and God! In her swift, gentle, noiseless triumph over night, she is tremulous with His presence. It was "at the turning of the morning" that "the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." And after a deliverance no less thrilling from a no less heartless foe, the Church of a later day sang—

> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved.
> God helpeth her at the turning of the morning.

But behind the victory lies a struggle always fierce and often lonely in the grey dawn. "Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him till the rising of the dawn." Such a struggle in the dawn is the prophecy of a great and triumphant day.[2]

> We weep because the night is long,
> We laugh for day shall rise,
> We sing a slow contented song
> And knock at Paradise.
> Weeping we hold Him fast who wept
> For us, we hold Him fast;
> And will not let Him go except
> He bless us first or last.
>
> Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
> We will not let Him go
> Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
> And summer smite the snow:
> Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
> Shall coo the livelong day;
> Then He shall say, "Arise, My love,
> My fair one, come away."[3]

[1] *Letters of Dr. John Brown*, 176. [2] J. E. M'Fadyen.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti.

III.

The Result of the Wrestling.

1. One result is *a changed name.*—What an epoch in his spiritual life this was, we understand best when we consider the name of Israel, which in this conflict he won, and which hereafter as a memorial of his victory he bore. For, indeed, we must contemplate this struggle as having left Jacob from that day forth a different man from what it found him. The new creature had by and in these painful throes extricated itself for ever from the old, won permanent form and subsistence, and thus demanded a new name to express it.

¶ How does Jacob learn his own real character? "What is thy name?"—that is the searching question which God is forcing down into the very depths of his soul. And what is he compelled to answer? "I am Jacob"—a liar, a supplanter, a deceiver! How blackly does this name show, in the pure, burning light of that other name, the name of the Holy God! Thus does Jacob learn to know himself and sink appalled. But the very confession of the old name—which indicates the old character—is the necessary preliminary to receiving the new name—the new character.

2. But a changed name means *a changed man.*—The "Supplanter" becomes the "Prince." He has a new name because he has a new nature. He becomes as noble as he had been false, worthy of the love and reverence of his children, worthy of standing in honour before kings; and a long train of genuine sorrow follows the embalmed remains of him who had once been a mean despicable boy. And yet he remains Jacob still. For the character is like the face which indicates it; the features do not change, though the expression does.

¶ Think how this is with yourselves. If any one of you is changing for the worse, I tell you, you cannot help showing it. The shifty look of deceit, or the sneer of irreverence, or the absurd airs of vanity, or the dark lowering cloud of some secretly cherished sin—these, creeping over the features, do not change them, but they change the expression of the face. And so, on the other hand, if man or boy is passing from evil to good, it is as if the mists are rolled off some landscape by the

sun as he climbs the heavens, and the gloomy scenery is lit up as with the joy of a new birth.[1]

3. There is *no more confidence in the flesh.*—"As the sun rose upon him, he halted on his thigh." Like St. Paul, his "strength is made perfect in weakness." The result of Peniel is not elation; it is contrition. There is joy in God, but there is no confidence in the flesh.

Contented now upon my thigh
I halt, till life's short journey end;
All helplessness, all weakness, I
On Thee alone for strength depend;
Nor have I power from Thee to move:
Thy nature and Thy name is Love.

¶ It is this recognition of conscious weakness that leads a man to grip the power of his higher self. When conscience wrestles with me, it is always in the form of a man. It is my higher self that strives with me—the Christ within. We have all a higher self—a photograph which God took in some pure moment. We have left it behind, but it follows us. It meets us in our silent hours. It confronts us with the spectacle of what we might have been. It refuses to let us go until it has blessed us. It is the same thing as Paul felt when he spoke of the spirit lusting against the flesh. The spirit was his better photograph, his Christ, his hope of glory. It is not the actual man that makes us feel immortal; it is the ideal man—the man that might have been. That is the reason why to me conscience is precious even when it wounds. It is no foreign hand that strikes me; it is my higher self, my inner man, my likeness as God sees it. It is the image of me that is hung up in heaven—the picture on which my Father gazes to avert despair. It is not only *with* me that the man wrestles; he wrestles with the Father *for* me. He pleads my future possibilities. He suggests my coming glory. He tells what I would be in less vile raiment. He shows what I may be with the ring and the robe. He reveals how I shall look at the breaking of the day.[2]

Lord, I have wrestled through the livelong night;
Do not depart,
Nor leave me thus in sad and weary plight,
Broken in heart;
Where shall I turn, if Thou shouldst go away,
And leave me here in this cold world to stay?

[1] H. H. Almond. [2] G. Matheson.

I have no other help, no food, no light,
No hand to guide;
The night is dark, my Home is not in sight,
The path untried;
I dare not venture in the dark alone,—
I cannot find my way, if Thou be gone.

I cannot yet discern Thee as Thou art;
More let me see;
I cannot bear the thought that I must part
Away from Thee:
I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless;
Oh! help me, Lord, in all my helplessness![1]

[1] J. Sharp.

Shiloh.

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SHILOH.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh come (R.V.*m.* till he come whose it is);
And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.—Gen. xlix. 10.

THE passage is obscure and its meaning is still uncertain. But Jews and Christians alike have from very early times regarded it as Messianic. In order to bring out the special Messianic thought which it contains, let us (after glancing at the context) consider the position held in the line of prophecy by the tribe of Judah, let us next examine the meaning and application of the word Shiloh, and then let us see how the thought finds its fulfilment in Christ.

The text occurs in that important and difficult section of Genesis (xlix. 1–27) which is called the Blessing of Jacob. It is one of the oldest pieces of Hebrew poetry that we possess, and consists of a series of oracles describing the characters and fortunes of the twelve tribes of Israel, as unfolded during the ages of the Judges and under the early monarchy. That it was composed from the first in the name of Jacob appears clearly from internal indications; but that it was actually uttered by the patriarch on his death-bed to his assembled sons is a hypothesis which several considerations combine to render incredible. In the first place, the outlook of the poem is bounded by a particular historical situation, removed by many centuries from the supposed time of utterance. No reason can be imagined why the vista of the future disclosed to Jacob should open during the settlement of the tribes in Canaan, and suddenly close at the reign of David or Solomon; why trivial incidents like the maritime location of Zebulun, or the "royal dainties" produced by Asher, or even the loss of tribal independence by Issachar, etc., should be dwelt upon to the exclusion of events of far greater national and religious

importance, such as the Exodus, the mission of Moses, the leadership of Joshua, or the spiritual prerogatives of the tribe of Levi.

¶ It is obvious that the document as a whole has historic significance only when regarded as a production of the age to which it refers. (1) The analogy of O.T. prophecy, which has been appealed to, furnishes no instance of detailed prevision of a remote future, unrelated to the moral issues of the speaker's present. (2) In the next place, the poem is animated by a strong national sentiment such as could not have existed in the lifetime of Jacob, while there is a complete absence of the family feeling which would naturally find expression in the circumstances to which it is assigned, and which, in fact, is very conspicuous in the prose accounts of Jacob's last days. (3) The subjects of the oracles are not Jacob's sons as individuals, but the tribes called by their names. (4) Nor is there any allusion to incidents in the personal history of Jacob and his sons except in the sections on Reuben and on Simeon and Levi, and even there a tribal interpretation is more natural. (5) Finally, the speaker is not Jacob the individual patriarch, but Jacob as representing the ideal unity of Israel.[1]

I.

Judah.

1. *The place allotted to Judah by promise.*—Let us consider the prophecy on Judah as a whole, and first, irrespectively of the disputed clause (in which the word "Shiloh" occurs). It forms one of a series of promises which are based upon an evident plan; and if it is to be properly estimated due regard must be given to its place in the series. The promise of an august future is first given to Abraham (xii. 2, 3): then it is limited to Isaac alone among his sons (xxii. 17, xxvi. 4): then it is further limited to Jacob (xxvii. 29). In chap. xlix., while abundant blessings for both land and people are showered upon Ephraim, Judah is plainly singled out among the tribes as the heir of the supremacy and power promised before to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (compare especially xlix. 8 and xxvii. 29); his father's sons bow down to him, and the symbols of authority are retained by him till the period of contest is over, and peace (as described in verse 11) is secured. More than this, he is the *leader* of the tribes: but if

[1] J. Skinner.

this supremacy be attached to him, then he is the tribe on which the maintenance and future history of the theocracy depend. Thus the prophecy falls into its place in the series: and when, at a later stage of the history, there is promised first (2 Sam. vii. 10–17) the permanence of a particular dynasty, and afterwards (Isa. vii., ix.) a particular ruler of the same dynasty, both belong to the same tribe of Judah here singled out from among the whole group. However we interpret verse 10, then, the prophecy holds its rightful place, and is Messianic in that it promises *an ideal future to Judah.*[1]

¶ Judea has been not merely a personal but a national force in the arena of the world's destinies. All nations have taken their part in the grand sum-total of history, but it is Judea that has led the way, both in the understanding and in the shaping of the destinies of the world. Disraeli has boasted that "the most popular poet in England is the sweet singer of Israel," and that "the Divine image of the most illustrious of the Hebrews" has been again raised amid the homage of kneeling millions in the most civilized of the kingdoms of Europe.[2]

2. *Judah the Royal Tribe.*—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet." Is Judah here represented as possessing, not supremacy or hegemony only, but royalty? In answering this question we must not, of course, read the history into the prophecy; for to what it refers historically is just the matter in dispute. The question is, *What image does the passage suggest?* Is it the *staff* of a military leader or the *sceptre* of a king? It seems to be the latter. (1) It is true that *shebet sopher*, in Judg. v. 14, may signify a marshal's staff, but *shebet* without any qualification would surely suggest a sceptre. (2) The staff "between his feet" presents the posture of a king seated on his throne rather than of a commander engaged upon active service. (3) This interpretation is supported by the phrase in verse 8, where, when Joseph's brethren hear of the sheaves "bowing down" to him, they immediately ask, "Wilt thou be king over us," or "rule over us"? It is difficult not to feel that the prophecy anticipates for Judah not hegemony only, but royalty.

3. *Judah the Tribe of Jesus Christ.*—"It is evident that our

[1] S. R. Driver. [2] J. Kelman, *Ephemera Eternitatis*, 237.

Lord hath sprung out of Judah" (Heb. vii. 14). The whole interest which gathers round this picture of royalty centres, for us, in Christ. Whatever interpretation we put on the word "Shiloh," its position and meaning in the text, and how far the original thought of the writer must be connected with the ultimate fulfilment of the prophecy, we shall not go wrong in connecting the "Sceptre" of Judah with the reign of the Messiah Jesus. We know that the historic Christ of the Gospels, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, has sprung from the royal historic tribe of Judah. "The lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath overcome" (Rev. v. 5). "And he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15).

II.

Shiloh.

What is the meaning of the words translated "until Shiloh come"?

1. The main difficulty of the passage centres round this clause. If "Shiloh" be a personal name, it must be significant; but it cannot mean "peaceful" or "peace-bringer," which have been sometimes suggested; nor is there any allusion to "Shiloh" as a title of the Messiah in any other part of the Bible; nor is the word so taken here in any ancient version. The name as a title of the Messiah is first found in a fanciful passage of the Talmud (*Sanh.* 98[b]), where the present passage is quoted.

¶ The rendering *Until Shiloh come* is found in no version earlier than those of the sixteenth century (Seb. Münster, 1534, and, following him, the "Great Bible," 1539–41, and other English versions).[1]

2. The first margin of the Revised Version "till he come to Shiloh" is grammatically unexceptionable. It was proposed first in modern times by W. G. Teller in 1766, was adopted by Herder and Ewald, and also by Delitzsch, Dillmann (provisionally; for he thinks that a really satisfactory explanation is not to be found), and Strack, in their Commentaries. In favour of this view Delitzsch urges the great philological difficulty alluded to above,

[1] S. R. Driver.

as attaching to the popular explanation of the name "Shiloh," and observes that elsewhere in the Old Testament the word denotes regularly the place of that name in the tribe of Ephraim: then, looking at the history, he supposes the reference to be to the assembling of Israel at Shiloh described in Josh. xviii., when, the period of wandering and conflict being now over, Judah, it may be supposed, lost the pre-eminence, or tribe-leadership held by it before: the "obedience of the peoples" was realized primarily in the victories of David, while at the same time it would include that ideal relation of Israel to the heathen, of which the prophets speak more distinctly. Upon this view, as no *royalty* attached to Judah at this early time, *shebet* in verse 10 will, of course, denote not a "sceptre," but a "staff," the symbol of military power, and must be rendered accordingly.

¶ This view is set forth in a specially attractive form by Herder. We see Judah, the honoured of his brethren, victorious after battle, marching in triumphal progress to the national sanctuary (1 Sam. i.–iv.), and there laying down the emblem of authority in order to enjoy the fruits of peace, while the nations round bow submissive to his sway. It is, however, very doubtful whether it can be sustained; and in spite of the names that can be quoted for it, it has not been viewed with favour by recent scholars. Thus it is historically doubtful whether Judah really enjoyed that early pre-eminence in a united Israel, which this interpretation postulates for it: Judah had no particular connexion with Shiloh (which was in the tribe of *Ephraim*); and it seems natural to think of *shebet* in verse 10 as suggesting "sovereignty," rather than merely tribal or military pre-eminence.[1]

3. The rendering "until that which is his shall come," proposed as the second alternative in the margin of the Revised Version, is grammatically quite legitimate. It is more legitimate, on the whole, than the third alternative, "till he come whose it is." But this last rendering seems to give the best sense. The "it" would refer to the kingdom, and the meaning would be that the government shall not depart from Judah till He comes to whom of right belongs all authority and power. Ezekiel almost certainly is thinking of this early prophecy when in a Messianic passage he says, "And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the

[1] S. R. Driver.

prince of Israel whose day is come . . . thus saith the Lord, Remove the mitre and take off the crown: this shall be no more the same: exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him" (Ezek. xxi. 25–27).

¶ We obtain a prophecy, in flowing, parallelistic rhythm, of that ideal, Messianic king, whom Isaiah saw in prophetic vision, and of whom he said that "His rule should be ample" (ix. 7), and that "unto him should the nations seek" (xi. 10).

Render therefore—

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the staff (of authority) from between his feet,
Until he come for whom it (*i.e.* the dominion) is appointed,
And to him be the obedience of peoples,

the meaning of which will be, "The dominion granted to Judah shall give place only to a far wider monarchy, viz. that of the Messiah."[1]

III.

Christ.

i. The Coming.

1. Now turn from questions of exegesis, with their necessary limitations and Jewish colouring, to the thought of Messianic prophecy and its fulfilment from a purely Christian standpoint. St. Paul says, "*When the fulness of the time came*, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. iv. 4). This is the light in which the New Testament writers view all Old Testament prophecy. It is certain that God's revelation of His plan was gradual, but how gradual, and when men were first permitted to participate in the unfolding of His plan, it is impossible for us to know. The advent of the Messiah has been compared to the growth of a plant; we cannot discern its beginning, but we can watch it through successive stages until it comes to the perfect bloom. So with the approach to the "fulness of the time" of which St. Paul speaks. One "Anointed One" after another succeeded to the throne of Judah, but the long-expected Messiah tarried. And yet through all these darker ages may be traced the growth and development

[1] T. K. Cheyne.

in the unfolding of God's plan until it reached the full fruition in the Messiah Jesus. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." But "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

For as warm love falls wholly unperceived
Into our hearts
Amid the careless riot of our days,
So came He then.
And at the sweetness of His infant smile
The hallow'd earth
Thro' all her being thrilled with pulse of spring.
Each little bulb
Hid in the dark recesses of her heart,
And ev'ry seed
And root, felt it and trembled, and they said,
"Now is He come
That knows and loves us all." And on fields,
And on the hills
Around, there shone the glory of the Lord;
And no one knew.[1]

2. Do we say that there is a great leap between the teaching of the Old Testament and that of the New? Perhaps this is true, but the leap is not unprepared for. No one can read the Book of Wisdom without being struck with the many points of similarity between its teaching and the theology of the Apostle Paul. There can be little doubt that it was one of the most important sources from which he drew the materials out of which he constructed his philosophy of the Christian religion. In this book there is a wonderful passage about the Divine Word which, though figurative in language, and set in the midst of Jewish thought, seems to transport us into Christian Theology and the language of St. John. It bridges the gulf between the Old Testament and the New: "For while peaceful silence enwrapped all things, and night in her own swiftness was in mid course, thine all-powerful Word leaped down from heaven out of the royal throne" (Wisd. xviii. 14, 15).

¶ The sun sets on the 24th of December on the low roofs of Bethlehem, and gleams with wan gold on the steep of its stony ridge. The stars come out one by one. Time itself, as if sentient,

[1] Ruth R. Chadwick.

seems to get eager, as though the hand of its angel shook as it draws on towards midnight. Bethlehem is at that moment the veritable centre of God's creation. How silently the stars drift down the steep of the midnight sky! Yet a few moments, and the Eternal Word will come.[1]

Like silver lamps in a distant shrine,
The stars are sparkling bright;
The bells of the city of God ring out,
For the Son of Mary was born to-night;
The gloom is past, and the morn at last
Is coming with orient light.

Never fell melodies half so sweet
As those which are filling the skies;
And never a palace shone half so fair
As the manger bed where our Saviour lies;
No night in the year is half so dear
As this which has ended our sighs.

ii. The Purpose of the Coming.

The ultimate purpose of His coming is expressed by St. Paul in two sentences, one of which is found in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the other in the companion Epistle to the Colossians.

1. It is God's purpose, says the Apostle, to "gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10). This corresponds with the Authorized translation of our text: "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Christ is the centre. God will exalt Him. The world may despise Him. In Psalm lxii. we read, "They only consult to cast him down"; and in Psalm ii., "The kings of the earth and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed." But Jehovah has said, "My purpose shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure." Though earth and hell conspire to prevent it, "Unto him"—the Christ of God—"shall the gathering of the people be."

¶ This is a gathering together of scattered things, sundered things, things which ought to be living in fruitful harmony, but which are rioting in alienation and revolt. It is the gathering together of distracted and wasteful members round about the governance of a common head. It implies the ending of a riotous

[1] F. W. Faber.

independence, and of sluggish and selfish apathy, and a welding together of many members into a blessed and prosperous unity. How is the gathering together effected? Let me illustrate. You take a handful of steel filings and scatter them over the surface of a sheet of paper. There they lie, severed and apart, each one by itself, having no communion with the others. Now take a strong magnet and draw it beneath the under surface of the paper. What happens? Each of the steel filings stands erect, and the whole company moves across the page in orderly and co-operative movement. Each item was first of all pervaded by the common power of the magnet, and then in the strength of the common pervasion all the items moved in fellowship.[1]

¶ It is most essential to heaven, that the material universe should be brought into perfect harmony with it; and it is just as essential to the peace and glory of the material universe that it should become harmonious with heaven. Neither can be complete without the other. "*As* it is in heaven, *so* on earth." Is not this sweet equilibrium between the material and the spiritual, and between both and God, precisely the mystery of His will "which from everlasting he purposed in himself"?[2]

2. The second sentence is found in Col. i. 18, "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence." This corresponds with the translation of our text which has been adopted in the foregoing exposition: "Until he shall come whose it (the kingdom or dominion) is." Our lives are failures if we give not Christ the first place. He is the beginning and the ending. If we fail to exalt Him and give Him the pre-eminence, work must be barren, souls must be famished, all must come to naught; if we are not one with God in this great purpose, we must be defeated. But oh, how blessed when, by the gracious leading of the Holy Ghost, we are in communion, in sympathy with the Father, and we let Him whom He will exalt take the first place.

¶ Christ is King and Lawgiver. To Him all government rightly belongs. He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. He came once in humility and weakness; He will come again "with power and great glory." He is gone away, like the king in His own parable, "to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." The blessing of God rests on the nation or family in which Jesus Christ reigns supreme. If His empire is established in a family, then nothing else matters; no trials or bereavements or losses are of any real importance if we can truly

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] J. Pulsford.

say, "Jesus Christ is the real Master in this house." And what is true of the family is true of the individual soul. If Christ is reigning in the soul, nothing else matters; so the practical question for each of us is just this, Does Jesus Christ reign in my heart? If Christ were to come again this month, this week, or this very day, whom would He find occupying the throne of my heart? Would He find every thought brought under His obedience? If we cannot say as much as this, can we truly say that we are aiming at this ideal, that we are struggling towards it, that we are beating back pride and worldliness and lust, and striving to keep our imagination and thoughts in check, owning as His loyal subjects the empire of Jesus Christ in the soul?[1]

¶ Browning's conception of Christ's supremacy does not rest on any morality He may have possessed or taught, though

> Morality to the uttermost,
> Supreme in Christ we all confess,

but upon His own person, as He Himself claimed.

> Does the precept run, "Believe in good,
> In justice, truth, now understood
> For the first time"?—or, "Believe in me
> Who lived and died, yet essentially
> Am Lord of Life"?

And this carries with it the faith that the Gospel brings to man, not merely

> A motive and injunction
> For practising what we know already,

but

> A new truth; no conviction gains
> Of an old one only, made intense,
> By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

iii. The Consummation of the Kingdom.

1. Though Christ reigns a King for ever, we have still to look forward to the time when all shall own His universal sway. "Weep not," said one of the Elders to St. John, "behold the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah hath overcome." In Genesis we read, "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up." And how does this describe the Saviour—that "Lion

[1] B. W. Randolph.

of the tribe of Judah"—that strong and mighty Lion who entered into conflict with the lion of the pit and overcame him? From the prey He has gone up again, up into His glory, gone up beyond the stars, up to the Right Hand of the Infinite Majesty, there to sit in perpetual peaceful triumph. "He stooped down, he couched as a lion, as an old lion." The lion may have been an emblem that befitted the son of Jesse. The *lion couchant* might have been fitly chosen for his heraldic device, when the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and of Saul. Yet with how much more propriety may this emblem be emblazoned on the arms of Prince Emmanuel! Did He not stoop down? Was ever such a stoop as His? Let Him be crowned with majesty who bowed His head to death. It is for this that He deserves to conquer, because He was willing to submit to shame and death itself for the sake of His people. How glorious it is to think that He has gone up, seeing that He once came down!

2. What are the ideas associated with this title, "Lion of the tribe of Judah?" Chiefly these two—(1) Personal strength and courage, and (2) Deliverance.

(1) Take, first, the idea of *personal strength and courage.* You may search the annals of bravery through, and you will find no bravery comparable to that of Jesus Christ. Our Lord's gentleness was not weakness, and His love was not effeminacy. Beneath the gentleness and the love—nay, in it, there was a courage the like of which the world has never seen. And our Lord's courage displays itself most gloriously in the fact that He faced the Cross.

(2) And the other idea associated with the name "Lion of the tribe of Judah" is that of *deliverance.* That is perhaps the principal idea suggested by the title. The Lion of the tribe of Judah was to be a great Liberator, a great Emancipator. And though perhaps the Jews of our Lord's day did not realize it, all the prophets' predictions as to the liberating and emancipating side of Messiah's work were fulfilled in the Lamb slain. The Lamb slain was the Lion who delivered. Only it was a better and fuller deliverance than the Jews had expected. For the deliverance the Jew expected was merely a national and political deliverance. The emancipation he looked for was emancipation

from the foreign yoke. But, as a matter of fact, the Jew suffered from a far more awful bondage than the bondage of Rome. He was in bondage to sin. Yes, and not he only, but all the wide world, lay groaning beneath this terrible burden of sin. And it was from this far more grievous burden and from this far more galling bondage that Jesus came to deliver men. You remember that it was as a Deliverer that He was announced. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel to Joseph, "for it is he that shall save his people from their sins."

¶ "The Lion and the Lamb." This illustrates more than the contrast between the Christ of Jewish expectation and the Christ of history; it illustrates the contrast between *Jewish expectation* and *the Divine purpose.* The Jews looked to see power and force, whereby all their foes should be destroyed, and instead of that they saw gentleness and tenderness and sacrificial love. Their method of realizing the kingdom was, shall I say, "the mailed fist"; God's method of realizing the kingdom was by the sacrifice of the Cross. While the whole nation was on the alert, waiting for some voice to announce the advent of the Deliverer and to say, "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah," the voice of John the Baptist fell upon their ears with quite a different announcement. "Behold," he said, "the Lamb of God"—the Lamb of God's own providing. It was not God's purpose to subdue the world by force; it was His purpose to win it by love.[1]

Both guns and swords are strong, no doubt,
  And so are tongue and pen,
And so are sheaves of good bank-notes
  To sway the souls of men.

But guns and swords, and gold and thought,
  Though mighty in their sphere,
Are sometimes feebler than a smile,
  And poorer than a tear.

[1] J. D. Jones.

The Burning Bush.

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THE BURNING BUSH.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.—Exod. iii. 2.

1. IT was a very sharp descent from Pharaoh's palace to the wilderness; and a shepherd's life was a strange contrast to the brilliant future that once seemed likely for Moses. But God tests His weapons before He uses them, and great men are generally prepared for great deeds by great sorrows. Solitude is "the mother-country of the strong," and the wilderness, with its savage crags, its awful silence, and the unbroken round of its blue heaven, was a better place to meet God in than the heavy air of a palace, or the profitless splendours of a court.

2. Among the desolate solitudes of Horeb, occasional fertile spots are to be found. A thin alpine turf covers the soil, whose verdure forms a delightful contrast to the awful sterility of the naked rocks around. A perennial spring oozes up in some shady cleft, and sends its scanty rill down the mountain-side, marking its course among the crags by a green streak of moss and grass which its life-giving waters have nourished. To one of these little oases Moses led the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, at the close of his sojourn in this secluded region. He had probably given up all thought of Israel's deliverance, which had been the dream of his youth; and in the peaceful and monotonous occupation of a shepherd hoped to end his days. But God had a higher destiny in view for him, for which he had been insensibly trained by his meditative employment amid the solemn influences of the lonely hills. This was, unknown to himself, to be the last day of his shepherd life. The skill and fidelity which had been exerted in tending sheep were to find nobler scope for their exercise in guiding and training men.

I.

The Preparation of Moses.

1. "In process of time the king of Egypt died," probably the great Rameses, no other of whose dynasty had a reign which extended over the indicated period of time. If so, he had while living every reason to expect an immortal fame as the greatest among Egyptian kings, a hero, a conqueror on three continents, a builder of magnificent works. But he has won only an immortal notoriety. "Every stone in his buildings was cemented with human blood." The cause he persecuted has made deathless the banished refugee, and has gibbeted the great monarch as a tyrant, whose misplanned severities wrought the ruin of his successor and his army. Such are the reversals of popular judgment; and such the vanity of fame.

> Nought but a gust of wind is earthly fame,
> Which blows from this side now, and now from that,
> And, as it changes quarter, changes name.
>
> Renown of man is like the hue of grass,
> Which comes and goes; the same sun withers it,
> Whereby from earth the green plant raised was.[1]

2. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried." Another monarch had come at last, a change after sixty-seven years, and yet no change for them! It filled up the measure of their patience, and also of the iniquity of Egypt. We are not told that their cry was addressed to the Lord; what we read is that it reached Him, who still overhears and pities many a sob, many a lament, which ought to have been addressed to Him, and is not. Indeed, if His compassion were not to reach men until they had remembered and prayed to Him, who among us would ever have learned to pray to Him at all? Moreover He remembered His covenant with their forefathers for the fulfilment of which the time had now arrived. "And God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them."

3. While this anguish was being endured in Egypt, Moses was maturing for his destiny. Self-reliance, pride of place, hot and

[1] Dante, *Purg.* xi. 100–2, 115–17 (trans. by Paget Toynbee).

impulsive aggressiveness, were dying in his bosom. To the education of the courtier and scholar was now added that of the shepherd in the wilds, amid the most solemn and awful scenes of nature, in solitude, humiliation, disappointment, and, as we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in enduring faith. Wordsworth has a remarkable description of the effect of a similar discipline upon the good Lord Clifford. He tells—

> How he, long forced in humble walks to go,
> Was softened into feeling, soothed, and tamed.
>
> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
> His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.
>
> In him the savage virtues of the Race,
> Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts were dead:
> Nor did he change; but kept in lofty place
> The wisdom which adversity had bred.

There was also the education of advancing age, which teaches many lessons, and among them two which are essential to leadership—the folly of a hasty blow, and of impulsive reliance upon the support of mobs. Moses the man-slayer became exceeding meek; and he ceased to rely upon the perception of his people that God by him would deliver them. His distrust, indeed, became as excessive as his temerity had been, but it was an error upon the safer side. "Behold, they will not believe me," he says, "nor hearken unto my voice."

¶ It is an important truth that in very few lives the decisive moment comes just when it is expected. Men allow themselves to be self-indulgent, extravagant, and even wicked, often upon the calculation that their present attitude matters little, and they will do very differently when the crisis arrives, the turning-point in their career, to nerve them. And they waken up with a start to find their career already decided, their character already moulded. As a snare shall the Day of the Lord come upon all flesh; and as a snare come all His great visitations meanwhile. When Herod was drinking among bad companions, admiring a shameless dancer, and boasting loudly of his generosity, he was sobered and saddened to discover that he had laughed away the life of his only honest adviser. Moses, like David, was "following

the ewes great with young," when summoned by God to rule His people Israel. Neither did the call arrive when he was plunged in moody reverie and abstraction, sighing over his lost fortunes and his defeated aspirations, rebelling against his lowly duties. The humblest labour is a preparation for the brightest revelations, whereas discontent, however lofty, is a preparation for nothing. Thus, too, the birth of Jesus was first announced to shepherds keeping watch over their flock. Yet hundreds of third-rate young persons in every city in this land to-day neglect their work, and unfit themselves for any insight, or any leadership whatever, by chafing against the obscurity of their vocation.[1]

4. When the hopes of his youth were dead, buried, and forgotten, when his fiery spirit was tamed into patience, and his turbulent passion stilled into solemn repose—at last, Moses came out of school. Then, but not until then, was he openly consecrated as God's missionary to rescue the Israelites from their grinding bondage and their great despair; to organize them into a nation, to give them their holy laws, and to be their leader along a pathway of miracle to the Promised Land. Not a lesson had been left, not a moment had been lost, for he needed the weary discipline and gathered force of all those quiet years before he could obey his high vocation and do his great work well.

¶ In darkness, underneath the January rime and frost, God is getting ready the royal glories of June. The flower that is to burst open to the sun at a certain hour six months hence, He has even now in hand. By silent and mystical touches He is already educating the tree to bear its autumnal clusters, and it is His ordination that there shall be eleven months of husbandry for one month of harvest. In the spiritual field you may trace the action of the same law. Man is often in haste; God never. We would give the largest measure of time to results; He gives the largest measure to preparations. We burn with eagerness to bring our instrumentalities into action, for we are apt to value that agent most whose work makes most show in a report, or whose life is longest before the public eye. He, on the contrary, often brings His most honoured servants through a long strain of trial and a long path of obscurity to fit them for some short service that is, after all, unknown to human fame; for a single word spoken in a breath, or a single deed, over and done in a day, may heighten the joy of heaven, and break into issues that will flow on for ever. Years may be needful to prepare you for saying

[1] G. A. Chadwick.

"Yes" or "No" in some one critical moment, and many a man may be in training all his life for the work of life's last hour. We sometimes try to reap in sowing time, but He never sends forth fruit until the season is fitted for the fruit, and the fruit for the season.[1]

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same![2]

II.

The Approach of God.

1. When in this or in any other scene of holy story we meet with One who wears the supreme name, yet holds a subordinate office; who is God, yet sent by God; God, yet seen; God, yet heard—who is this "Traveller unknown"? Not the Divine Father, "for he dwelleth in secret." Besides, in the economy of grace the Father is evermore the sender, the Son the sent. It must, therefore, be the Son. This thought is our only outlet from a maze of contradictions. Through all time, at first by His visits to our world as a celestial stranger; at last by His life as a man, Christ has been "the angel of the Lord."

[1] C. Stanford. [2] Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

¶ It would be absurd to seek the New Testament doctrine of the Logos full-blown in the Pentateuch. But it is mere prejudice, unphilosophical and presumptuous, to shut one's eyes against any evidence which may be forthcoming that the earliest books of Scripture are tending towards the last conclusions of theology; that the slender overture to the Divine oratorio indicates already the same theme which thunders from all the chorus at the close.[1]

¶ Too often the term "angel" has for us a cloudy and indeterminate meaning; but we should resolve to make it clear. We are apt to use it as a term of *race*, and to distinguish the natives of heaven as angels, just as we distinguish the natives of earth as men. But it is in reality a term of *office*, simply meaning an envoy, a messenger, one who is sent. Doubtless any heavenly being who is sent on an errand of love to this globe is for the time an angel; but One there is above all others who deserves the name of angel. Sent not only out from the unknown heavens, but out from the very essence and depth of the unknown God; sent to reveal God's heart; sent to translate the Divine nature into the conditions of human nature, and to make the Divine Being not only conceivable by that which is finite, but approachable by that which is fallen; sent to discover and accomplish the Father's purposes of grace, and to fetch home to Him each lost and wandering child—Jesus is the Prince of Missionaries, "the Envoy extraordinary, the Evangelist supreme," the angel whom all other angels worship, and round whose throne thunders at this moment the mingled music of a numberless company, ceasing not day or night to ascribe to Him all the glory of redemption.[2]

2. "Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Here we approach a study in symbols. The vision of a bush burning with fire which did not consume it was full of symbolic meaning to Moses. What he saw outwardly with the natural eye, he was able to discern inwardly with the spiritual eye, because he was ready to see and hear what God would teach him.

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God;
> But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.

¶ A bush on fire with no human hand to set it alight, no fuel to keep it burning—it was just a picture to Moses of what God

[1] G. A. Chadwick. [2] C. Stanford.

could do with him, and a picture to the people of God for all time, of the grace of Him who is willing to dwell in human beings as lowly, as insignificant, as the little thorn bush on the Mount of Horeb.[1]

¶ It needed no great flame to reduce a bush quickly into a heap of white ashes. If, as in that arid region might well have been the case, the bush was scorched and withered—its leaves dead and limp, its branches dry and sapless—the flame would make all the speedier work with it. But the thorn was not consumed; no branch or twig or leaf was even scorched or singed; the flame played round it as innocuously as the sunset glory burns in a belt of wood. The Alpine traveller is familiar with one of the most beautiful sights of that beautiful region. At sunrise the serried pines projected against the sky on some mountain-ridge appear robed in dazzling brightness. The stems and branches lose their opacity, and shine with a transparent glory; while the leaves are burnished till they seem like angel's wings or fragments of the sun itself. As harmlessly as the sunrise glows in the Alpine pines, so harmlessly did the mysterious flame envelop the bush in the desert, because the Angel of the Covenant dwelt in it. His presence restrained the devouring fire, as afterwards it held in leash the stormy winds and waves of Gennesaret. The law of nature was subject to the stronger law of the Divine will. He made His minister here a flame of fire, and the fire fulfilled His word.[2]

III.

The Symbolism of the Burning Bush.

"Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." We must, like Moses, turn aside to discern the symbols which lie beneath the vision. The symbolism of the Burning Bush has been variously explained.

1. Some regard it as typical of the incarnation and the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. The thorny bush represents the humiliation and degradation of the Son of God when He came into our world and assumed the likeness of sinful flesh; the flame that enveloped it is an emblem of the intensity of suffering which He endured in our room and

[1] Mrs. Penn-Lewis, *Face to Face*, 39. [2] H. Macmillan.

stead from men and devils, and from the Father Himself; while the fact that the bush was unconsumed shadows forth His triumph over all His sufferings—over death and the grave. In visionary form we have here pictured to us the altar, the victim, and the sacrifice of the great atonement.

2. But the Burning Bush has also been taken to represent the condition of the Church. It was exactly suited to the circumstances of the children of Israel at the time. It was the true likeness of their sufferings in the furnace of affliction in Egypt. The thorny bush was a fit emblem of their character and position. As the plant was stunted and depressed by the ungenial character of its situation, creeping over the barren rock, scorched by the sun, and seldom visited by the kindly dew and rain and breeze, its stems producing thorns instead of graceful leaf and blossom-laden branches; so the Hebrew slaves, in their dreary bondage, were morally and intellectually dwarfed, and developed, under the influence of these unfavourable circumstances, the baser and more abject aspects of their nature. The thorn in the wilderness recalls the primeval curse upon man; and we have in the sufferings of Israel a repetition of the sufferings of our first parents after their expulsion from Paradise. The same cause which produced the one produced the other. The thorns of Adam's lot were the very same as those that stung the Hebrews in Egypt. And, by God's appearance in the thorn bush, we have the great fact of redemption shadowed forth, that God Himself has gone with us into the wilderness to be the sharer of our doom while redeeming us from it. It is a striking thought that in the very thorn of man's curse appeared the shining Angel of the Covenant to bless him; that out of the very wood of the thorn bush, which was the symbol of man's degradation, was constructed the tabernacle which was the symbol of his exaltation through the incarnation of the Son of God.

Thou art burning on, thou ancient tree,
  With unabated flame;
The fires of earth have beat on thee,
  And thou art still the same:
Thou art not lessened in degree,
  Nor tarnished in thy name.

Thou hast two sides of thy life on earth;
One has in dust its share,—
It blends with scenes of pain and dearth,
It touches common care:
The other seeks a higher birth,
And branches arms of prayer.

Oh, Church of the living Lord of all,
Like Him to thee is given
A common life with those that fall,
And an upper life in heaven;
A being with the weak and small,
And a path where stars are driven.

Thy starlight's glow shall put out the fires
That check thine earthly way;
The burning of thy pure desires
Shall burn thy dross away,
And in the love thy Christ inspires
Thou shalt endure for aye.[1]

3. Another aspect in which we may consider the parable of the Burning Bush is in the light it casts upon the nature of God. That light has been broadening and brightening from the time of Moses down even to our own age. Consider how God reveals Himself here, as the fire which burns, but does not consume.

(1) *In the world of matter.*—To the careless eye it seems that the fire of decay is for ever burning up and destroying the material things we see around us; but science teaches us that this is quite false, and that there is no such thing as destruction possible in God's universe. You may grind a stone to the finest powder and dissipate it to all the winds of heaven, but it is not in your power to annihilate the finest atom of it; it is conceivably possible to gather together all the infinitesimal fragments, when the weight would be found to be exactly what it was before its cohesion was interfered with. You may take solid iron and heat it till it becomes first soft as wax, then fluid like water, and next is changed into vapour; but by so doing you only alter its condition; you cannot destroy the least particle of it. The pool of water, when the sun has dried it all away, is not non-existent, it is only expanded into mist: it becomes part

[1] G. Matheson, *Sacred Songs*, 138.

of the cloud which anon will descend again upon the earth in the shape of rain. The tree which after standing for centuries slowly dies and crumbles beneath the withering finger of decay, though it disappears from the visible universe, is not really destroyed; in the shape of carbon and silica and of various gases every particle of it is as certainly in the universe as ever it was, and will be worked up anew into flower and pebble and living thing. And so it is with all that is to be found in God's creation. In his popular lecture on the burning of a candle, Faraday shows that when the candle has burnt to its socket and apparently been annihilated altogether, every particle of its constituent elements can be gathered together again and weighed and measured.

¶ When Goethe makes Nature sing—

> Here at the roaring loom of time I ply
> And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by;

and when Tennyson asks—

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

they are only putting into poetic form that which is a distinct truth of revelation. And if the material universe is thus a manifestation of God, science has made it abundantly evident that the fire which burns but does not consume, is the aptest possible symbol by which its nature, and the nature of the God who made it, can be set forth to man.[1]

(2) *Amid the play of the forces that are in the world.*—Almost the most important truth which science has demonstrated is that which is known as the Conservation of Energy; it establishes the fact that force, like matter, is indestructible, and that it is a fixed quantity in the universe. To the uninstructed mind it seems that energy is always being not only dissipated but destroyed; but this is just as impossible as that matter should be destroyed. When the blacksmith strikes his anvil till his arm grows weary, the force expended is not lost; it has simply changed its form from animal energy to heat, as is proved by the anvil growing hot. The energy residing in the steam which drives our locomotives and our machinery existed in the shape

[1] A. M. Mackay.

of heat in the glowing fires which created the steam; and before that it lay for centuries latent or hidden in the coal, which was dug out of the bowels of the earth; and earlier still, long, long ages ago, it manifested itself in vegetable energy, for what is now coal was once living forest; and earlier still it was manifested in the heat of the sun, which was taken up into the growing trees: so that in one sense the light and heat which our fires give forth are just the sunbeams which have been for ages imprisoned and hoarded up for the use of man. And while we can thus trace backward the force which drives the engine, we can follow it after it has done its work. It is neither lost nor destroyed. It is dissipated into the atmosphere in the form of heat, and perhaps will next manifest itself in an electrical form, in the tempest which rends the air and wraps the heavens in flame. All this is not mere conjecture. Just as it can be shown by delicate experiment that the candle which has burnt to its socket is still in existence in its every atom, so it is shown by the dynamometer that force never is and never can be lost. There is always the appearance of the annihilation of energy; there is never the reality. Force also resembles the bush which Moses saw; it is ever burning, yet it is never consumed. And when we remember that all energy, as all matter, comes from God and is a manifestation of God, we perceive how truly the vision which Moses saw was a symbol of the nature and the mode of operation of the Great "I AM" who creates and sustains all things.

¶ There is unity amid all diversity, persistence amid all the ebb and flow of the visible universe. Let us once truly grasp this truth, and we shall no longer be moved to melancholy by the reflection that "change and decay in all around we see." We shall be able believingly to say to God—

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee:

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom his might could render void;
Thou, Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

(3) *In the sphere of life.*—Life, we know, comes from God. His is the Spirit which animates all living things; in Him we live and move and have our being. In fact, He is *the* Life: it is only when He letteth His breath go forth that the face of the earth is renewed, and men and the lower creatures are created. And of *life* we may make exactly the same statement as we have made of *matter* and of *force*: it is indestructible. It may change its form and its mode of manifestation: but it cannot be annihilated or destroyed. Life in the universe—like matter and like force—seems to the uninstructed mind to burn to the socket and to go out; there seems to be such a thing as death: but in sober reality we may well accept the poet's dictum that "There is no death; what seems so is transition." Nature herself gives us a hint of this. In autumn there seems to be a final decay and dissolution, but it is only life disguising herself and going into hiding; spring shows that there has been no real diminution of the vital forces in our world, but probably rather an increase.

¶ Nature gives us no such unassailable proof of the indestructibility of life as she does of the indestructibility of force and of matter. Rather, at first glance, she would seem to show us that the individual life can be destroyed, for we cannot trace it as we can the individual atom of matter and of force; its place in this world knows it no more. But this only points us to the fact that there is an invisible, a spirit world, which we cannot reach by our material senses. For the analogy of Nature will not let us for one moment suppose that life can really be annihilated. If science teaches one thing more clearly than another it is this, that there is Unity in Nature. If matter cannot be destroyed, if force cannot be destroyed, we may feel certain that neither can life. If it be objected that we cannot see what has become of the soul after death, it is a sufficient reply to say that neither could men in Moses' time have known what became of material substances when they were burned with fire and disappeared from all human cognizance.

The flame may rise, the bush may burn
  In deserts lone and bare:
There is no waste of any bloom
  While God is present there.

The sun of human joy may set
Behind the stormy Cross:
While faith within the twilight kneels
There is not any loss.

Some homeless prayer may be at night
A wanderer on the moor,
But while it names the Blessed Name
It never can be poor.

(4) *We find a meaning for the vision in history.*—This vision would teach Moses, and surely it should teach us, that—in spite of all appearances to the contrary—there is permanence underlying God's purposes and will, and the love which informs those purposes. Moses may have heard of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, concerning their descendants, that they should become a great nation and should be a blessing to all the world. How had God kept His promises? The Israelites for centuries had been degraded and ill-used as hardly any other nation before or since. Would it not seem that God had changed His intentions and had forgotten to be gracious? But no, it was in appearance only—as the bush burned but was not consumed. And now at last the time had come which was to explain the past and make glorious the future.

¶ Let us believe that God's will is unchangeable, and at the very moment of seeming frustration is completing itself. Exercise this faith with regard to any question that perplexes. It is not the will of our Heavenly Father that one of earth's little ones should perish. He willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Believe that He will *have* His will. If it is written that "our God is a consuming fire," it must be a fire that consumes only the chaff, only the evil in men. This is the meaning of all sorrow and discipline on earth, and I believe it will one day be seen to be the meaning of what we speak of as eternal punishment. So far as there is a spark of good left in a bad man, the fire of God's love will burn, but not consume. Believe that God's purpose will not be frustrated in the accomplishment of that "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves." And believe meanwhile

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.

The Eternal Name.

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The Eternal Name.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.—Exod. iii. 13, 14.

A NEW day was dawning for Israel—the day of exodus—the era of national development—in which each man was to have a part unknown before. National expansion always involves new views, new terms, fresh adjustments, and changed ideals. And as Israel faced a new life, there was given a new view of God and new terms were chosen for its definition.

The text suggests three things—

I. The Necessity for the Name.
II. The Meaning of the Name.
III. The Revelation in the Name.

I.

The Necessity for the Name.

1. *Why did Moses ask to know the name of God?*—The reason, as the text tells us, was not primarily to satisfy himself, but that he might possess credentials wherewith he could approach this stubborn people. He had just been gazing at the burning bush, and by that sight he had been taught that the place where God reveals Himself is holy ground and that His presence should ever inspire reverence and holy fear. God appeared to Moses with a message, and Moses was charged to deliver it. Whereupon, overwhelmed by the commission, he urged: "But who am I that I should go in to Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the Children of Israel out of Egypt?" Moses recognized his own

insufficiency. Unless he could tell the Israelites and Pharaoh *in whose name he was sent*, he knew that it would be useless to undertake the commission.

¶ The naming of an heir to a throne is regarded as not unworthy of debate and argument by grave and aged ministers of State. Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, on succeeding to the throne, styled himself Edward VII., thus making an appeal to the noblest traditions of the English past. It was with deliberate intention that the late Emperor of Germany called himself Frederick William, and that his son, the present Emperor, chose the name of William. So the assumption of a title by the Popes, who at their accession to the tiara drop their own names, and choose a new one from those borne by the first Bishops of the Roman See, is watched with great interest as affording an indication of the probable policy and character of the coming pontificate. It was with relief that the world heard Cardinal Ricci take the style of Leo XIII., rather than that of Pius, or Gregory, or Clement, or Sixtus. No one can imagine that the late Emperor of the French could have held his throne for sixteen years had he, whose baptismal appellation was Louis Napoleon, preferred to be known as Louis XIX., instead of Napoleon III.[1]

2. *What did the commission of Moses mean?*—The Israelites without faith could not come near to God. Sinful as they were, they could not, if they dared, behold the glory of God. They could not even behold the face of Moses when it shone with the radiance of God's glory; still less could they understand the revelation of God's loving, ever-abiding presence which He vouchsafed to His true servant. This, then, was the commission given to Moses first of all—*to interpret God*—in so far as he could understand and interpret the incomprehensible—to this faithless people.

¶ When the people of Israel crowded for the first time into the House of God which Solomon had reared, the king, on bended knees and with uplifted hands, exclaimed: "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have builded." It is the spirit in which the Infinite should ever be approached by the finite. As no space can enclose Him, so no name can contain Him. Human speech, which can clothe the things of man in pompous attire, is poor, ragged, and beggarly when brought near the throne of God.

[1] C. C. Edmunds.

Even the holy angels, whose faculties have never been beclouded by sin, and who know the nearest and fullest revelations of God, bow before the Ineffable Unknown, the Unutterable One. Our words, then, which only glance superficially at earthly things and never reach their depths, how can they fitly describe or contain the Infinite, the Holy God, in whom is all fulness of perfection, whom we have never seen, and whom by faith alone we approach?[1]

3. *To interpret God in any degree a name is necessary.*—No name indeed can ever set God forth, yet some name we must have. Accordingly we revere the name of God as well as God Himself, and say: "Hallowed be thy name"; for though the name is only a name, as in any other case, yet it sets before us what no other name can—it sets before us a living God.

¶ My father named me after Boardman, that dauntless hero who preceded Judson in missionary work among the Karens. When I was old enough I read the history of the struggles, sufferings, and achievements of that brave young man. His name, which I so unworthily bear, has been to my soul an abiding and unfailing inspiration. Luther, Calvin, Knox, Bunyan, and Carey were long ago gathered to their fathers; but the power of their names is still invoked wherever Christian workmen need a higher courage, a steadier purpose, and a more fervent zeal. But there is a name above every name—a name which is reconstructing our disordered planet, re-creating our fallen and ruined humanity, and which stands everywhere for the sweetest charities of earth, the synonym of the purest life, and the symbol of the highest civilization; a name which carries healing to the wounded, rest to the weary, pardon to the guilty, and salvation to the lost; a name which makes the dark gateway of the tomb the portal to a temple resplendent with the glory of celestial light, where the music of golden harps by angels' fingers touched is ineffable and eternal.[2]

II.

The Meaning of the Name.

1. It is probable that the name Yahweh was not new to Moses or the Israelites. An entirely new name would have meant to them an entirely new God. It is extremely unlikely

[1] R. V. Pryce. [2] J. B. Hawthorne.

that the name is of Babylonian origin. If the supposed traces of it in Babylonian literature are genuine, they only point to the introduction of foreign (*i.e.* Western Semitic) cults. Some maintain that the name is found as an element in early North Syrian proper names. But, if so, this only implies that the name became known to Semitic tribes other than the Israelites.

¶ The ultimate etymology of the name is quite uncertain. The primary meaning of *hawah* was perhaps "to fall" (cf. Job xxxvii. 6, h°wē', ? "fall thou"), which is found also in Arabic. Hence some explain "Yahweh" as "He who causes rain or lightning to fall"; or "He who causes to fall (overthrows) by lightning", *i.e.* the Destroyer. In this case Yahweh in primitive Semitic times would be somewhat equivalent to the Assyrian Adad or Ramman. It is quite possible that the name Yahweh may in the far past have had a physical meaning, and have been a product of nature-worship.[1]

2. Hebrew writings tell us much as to the character and attributes of the God of the Old Testament, yet the exact meaning which the writer of Ex. iii. 14 attached to the name Yahweh is far from clear. Yahweh, however, may be considered as (1) causative imperfect of *hawah*, "to be," which would express "He who causes to be"—either the Creator or the Life-giver, or "He who brings to pass"—the Performer of His promises. But an objection to this interpretation is that this tense of the verb is found only in late Syriac. (2) The ordinary imperfect of *hawah*, "to be." The Hebrew imperfect denotes either *habitual* action, or *future* action, and therefore can be translated either "He who is," or "He who will be." The name "He who is" represents to modern thought the conception of an absolute existence—the unchangeable, self-consistent, absolutely existing One. And this has been adopted by many writers both in ancient and modern times. But the early Hebrew mind was essentially practical, not metaphysical. Professor A. B. Davidson (in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, ii. 199[b]) says that the verb "does not mean 'to be' essentially or ontologically, but phenomenally." He explains it as follows: "It seems evident that in the view of the writer *'ehyeh* and *yahweh* are the same; that God is *'ehyeh*, 'I will be,' when speaking of Himself, and *yahweh*, 'He will be,' when spoken of by others. What He will be is left unexpressed—He will be

[1] A. H. McNeile.

with them, helper, strengthener, deliverer"; the word is explained by the "I will be with thee," of verse 12.

¶ Among other interpretations Davidson's is the most attractive. The passage receives a simple and beautiful explanation if the expression, "I will be what I will be," is taken as an instance of the *idem per idem* idiom, which a speaker employs when he does not wish to be explicit. Moses asked for God's name, *i.e.* for a description of His nature and character (cf. Gen. xxxii. 29; Judg. xiii. 17 f.); and he was taught that it was impossible to learn this all at once. God would be what He would from time to time prove to be; each age would discover fresh attributes of His Being.[1]

3. The new name of God was no academic subtlety, no metaphysical refinement of the Schools, unfitly revealed to slaves, but a most practical and inspiring truth, a conviction to warm their blood, to rouse their courage, to convert their despair into confidence and their alarms into defiance. They had the support of a God worthy of trust. And thenceforth every answer in righteousness, every new disclosure of fidelity, tenderness, love, was not an abnormal phenomenon, the uncertain grace of a capricious despot; no, its import was permanent as an observation of the stars by an astronomer, ever more to be remembered in calculating the movements of the universe. In future troubles they could appeal to Him to awake as in the ancient days, as being He who "cut Rahab and wounded the Dragon." "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Therefore I trust, although to outward sense
  Both true and false seem shaken; I will hold
  With newer light my reverence for the old,
And calmly wait the births of Providence.
No gain is lost; the clear-eyed saints look down
  Untroubled on the wreck of schemes and creeds;
  Love yet remains, its rosary of good deeds
Counting in task-field and o'er peopled town;
Truth has charmed life! the Inward Word survives,
  And, day by day, its revelation brings;
  Faith, hope, and charity, whatsoever things
Which cannot be shaken, stand. Still holy lives
  Reveal the Christ of whom the letter told,
  And the new gospel verifies the old.[2]

[1] A. H. McNeile. [2] J. G. Whittier.

4. Two thoughts are evidently contained in the Name.

(1) There is the thought, first, of the *permanence of God.* We have often heard an expression concerning the "Great I Am," as if, in popular esteem, it involved only the thought of self-sufficiency; that God is complete in Himself, having no real need of others to augment His pleasure or to complete His world; that He rules alone, absolute Master and Dictator of everything, and in no way bound to listen to any earthly voice or make change in the operation of ordinary laws or sequences. But that is not the idea He was giving to Moses. It is all that some men claim to see in Him, and so they ignore Him and live alone. God had come to each of the old Hebrew saints, being to each of them what He was not to the others, and yet being the complete answer to the needs and aspirations of all. And it was in just this sense that He wanted to come into touch with the individual lives of His people through all succeeding time. Along with the spirit of adaptability which would make Him of value to each life, regardless of its eccentricities, was to go the thought of permanency. He lives perpetually in the present tense. "I AM," is His name. We live, so often, in other tenses. Some of us in the past, perhaps, when life was serener and we had other difficulties to combat; a past for which we long, because it was easier and more triumphant. Or, perhaps, we are living in the future, and feeling that all the blessedness of God's presence will be given to us then. This is the view that so many of us get, of a God who is to be ours by and by, when we shall have struggled through the world by dint of hard endeavour and have saved our souls—that the vision of God will be ours when heaven begins. But the personal presence, personal co-operation, personal blessing, is to be ours all through the years.

(2) But there is a thought here, also, as to the *permanence of life.* Our Saviour quoted this text and gave such emphasis to His interpretation that St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke have noted it. St. Matthew quotes Him as saying: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Christ emphasizes the eternal presence, and means us to note the tense. There is no statement

which suggests that the personal relation of God to these men was merely a matter of history—that it is entirely a thing of the past. Every past moment was once present, and so the statement of this perpetual presence reaches back into the past. But every future moment will at some time be present, and the eternal presence reaches forward through all coming time.

¶ One of the later scientific reinforcements of the philosophic argument for immortality has been drawn from the principle of continuity. This principle has been used by the authors of the *Unseen Universe* as the basis for the construction of an elaborate argument for the continuation of our life after death; and still further, with the help of other admitted physical truths, they have sought to render conceivable the possibility of another sphere of existence connected with this, yet superior to it, in which we have now our spiritual birthright, and into which after death our life shall without personal loss be transformed. According to this view, death would become a transference of individual existence from this visible universe to some other order of things intimately connected with it. The conclusion of their reasonings with regard to life in its connection with matter, they have expressed in this sentence: "In fine, we maintain that what we are driven to is not an under-life resident in the atom, but rather, to adopt the words of a recent writer, a Divine over-life in which we live and move and have our being."

5. As the sublime and beautiful conception of a loving spiritual God was built up slowly, age by age, tier upon tier, this was the foundation which ensured the stability of all, until the Head Stone of the Corner gave completeness to the vast design, until men saw and could believe in the very Incarnation of all love, unshaken amid anguish and distress and seeming failure, immovable, victorious, while they heard from human lips the awful words, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Then they learned to identify all this ancient lesson of trustworthiness with new and more pathetic revelations of affection: and the martyr at the stake grew strong as he remembered that the Man of Sorrows was the same yesterday and to-day and for ever; and the great apostle, prostrate before the glory of his Master, was restored by the touch of a human hand, and by the voice of Him upon whose bosom he had leaned, saying, Fear not, I am the First and the Last and the Living One.

¶ The mysterious "I AM" who spake to Moses is the same

"I am," the ever-existent Christ, who speaks to us. He whom we adore as submitting to death was the Lord of Life. He whom men treated with such indignity was the Lord, the Creator of angels. He whom men falsely and unjustly judged was the Judge of quick and dead, the sole executor of judgment, for it is said by Him, that the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He, the "I AM" who thus, as recorded in Exodus, at the bush, spake to Moses, and declared His intention of redeeming His people from Egyptian bondage, now redeemed them from another and far worse bondage, not by plaguing their oppressors, and physically destroying them, but by submitting Himself on their behalf, first to ignominy and tortures, and then to death. Not by power, not by might, but by My Spirit—the Spirit of love, meekness, gentleness, goodness —not by superhuman power, but by superhuman humility. "Thou art the king of glory, O Christ: thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father: when thou tookest upon thee to deliver man thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb; when thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

III.

The Revelation in the Name.

1. When God wants a man to do some good and useful work, He gives him a fresh thought about Himself, His character, and His purposes, a thought which tells him what He is, what He has done, what He is now doing, and what He wills to be done; and by that thought He not only illumines his mind, but also feeds his faith, sustains his patience, and fires his zeal, so that though he may never set foot in the land of promise, yets he keeps on, steadfastly climbing the slopes of Pisgah, and from its heights catches cheering glimpses of the lengthening issues of his toil.

¶ Somehow the revelation comes! You see it written on the sheet let down from heaven to the startled gaze of the sleeper on the house-top at Joppa, assuring him that the creative energy of God cleanses all His work of commonness and makes it full of meaning and beauty; that He condemns the narrowness that would shut out from His infinite love any Cornelius who fears God and works righteousness, and that therefore prejudiced and reluctant Peter must initiate a new era in the religious thought and life of the world.

It comes to the perplexed Augustine, as, with wearied brain and agitated soul, eager to find pardon for his sin and freedom from the tyranny of his youthful lusts, he wanders in the gardens of his friend Alypius, at Tagaste, and says to him, "Tolle lege; tolle lege!" "Take and read; take and read!" And forthwith he opens the New Testament and reads the closing verses of Romans xiii. and at once dedicates himself to the life of purity revealed in Jesus Christ.

Somehow it comes. See how it haunts the soul of Martin Luther, filling his youth with awe and firing it with the passion for holiness. Constraining him to listen to the spiritual counsels of Stanfutz, then goading him to undertake the pilgrimage to Rome, where, as he climbs "the holy staircase," he swiftly learns that God does not require men to crawl up the "Scala Santa" repeating hollow phrases, but to accept His free forgiveness, and from the impulse it gives follow after that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. It comes to John Wesley from the Moravians, and makes him glad with a new joy and strong with a new power. It comes to Dr. Clarke as he meditates on the needs of the churches, and guides him in creating that latest and most effective instrument, the Christian Endeavour movement, for the training and culture of the young in robust godliness, fervent piety, and fruitful service to mankind.

2. Wherein lay the strength of this revelation of God to Moses?

(1) First, it identified God with the work he was given to do. It asserted, in effect, that it was a part of His work, belonged to God, and partook of His eternity; did not depend primarily upon the worker, but upon God Himself. The man was but as a cog in the mighty wheel of the progress of the world; a tool in the hands of the infinite. In that is security. Moses had lived in the midst of whirling change, and inherited a past crowded with trouble and sorrow. His own fortunes had passed through the splendours of a court, the privations of the desert and the anxieties of the criminal; but now, as he faced the responsibilities of leadership, it was with the assurance that God, the God of Abraham, his father's God, endured, that He was the Eternal, the one fixed centre in a wide circle of ceaseless vicissitude, the "I am that I am"; and as He was, so was His work. Therefore the heart of Moses was fixed, trusting in the Lord, and he went to his task, body, soul, and spirit, with faith and insight, hope and endurance. He saw not the fleeting forms of service, but

God's invisible Israel, the regenerate future of humanity, the gold separated from the dross in the fires of trial, and man redeemed, ending triumphant over every obstacle, and feasting on the bounty of God.

¶ Where ordinary men see a stone and nothing more, the genius of Michael Angelo beholds an angel before hammer or chisel has touched it. To the eye of his companions John Newton is a drunken, swearing sailor; but God sees in him the redeemed, re-made, messenger of love and mercy. The people of Elstree see no more than a tinker, living a loose, irregular life, in John Bunyan; God sees the dreamer of the pilgrim journey from the City of Destruction to the land of Beulah. The call of God is so fraught with revelations of the possibilities of men and of man in God, that those who hear it go forth to their work with an unquenchable hopefulness and an all-subduing zeal.

Blind souls, who say that Love is blind;
  He only sees aright;
His only are the eyes that find
  The spirit's central light.

He lifts—while others grope and pry—
  His gaze serene and far;
And they but see a waste of sky
  Where Love can see the Star.

(2) When a man feels that his work is God's rather than his own, he is raised at once to the loftiest ranges of power by the development of his humility. The maximum of human force for any work is never reached till we are self-oblivious, absorbed in our task, heedless of ourselves and all besides, except the mission we have to carry out. At this height men are simply irresistible, for they are one with God's eternal purpose and almighty power.

¶ Ruskin says: "I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power, hesitation of speaking his opinions, but a right understanding of the relation of what he can do and say to the rest of the world's doings and sayings. All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it; they are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them; *only they do not think much of themselves on that account.* . . . They have a curious sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them—that

they could not do or be anything else than God made them; and they see something Divine and God-made in every man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful." Kipling pictures the artist at the supreme moment of his success as realizing that his work is due, not to his own genius, but to a power that is working in him and through him. This is our strength. God works in us, to work not only our own, but also the world's salvation.

Whither away, O brawling Stream,
Whither away so fast?
Fleeing for life and death you seem.
Speak, as you hasten past.

Answered the Brook, with a pompous roar,
Tossing its creamy foam,
"I go, my flood in the Main to pour—
Listen, O Sea, I come!"

Whither away, O River deep,
Gliding so slow and calm?
Your gentle current seems half asleep,
And chanting a drowsy psalm.

Answered the River, with whisper low,
Swaying her lilies fair;
"Down to the measureless Sea I go—
The Sea will not know I am there."[1]

(3) But the tenderest and strongest element in the new thought of God given to Moses is that God is the Redeemer, and is coming down to the lowest levels of the suffering life of Israel to save the people from all their troubles and raise them up to share His own life in its peace and joy for evermore. That is the sum of all God's speech to us. Out of the burning bush comes the revelation of the Cross. God is Himself at the centre of the fires that burn humanity; He is afflicted in all our afflictions; He shares our lot so that He may redeem us from all our iniquities.[2]

¶ *A living God means an active Redeemer.* This is the interpretation of God which Moses is to set before the people. God chooses Moses to go and speak to Pharaoh on Israel's behalf. He will be a Pillar of Fire, giving light by which an untrained, un-

[1] Augusta Moore, in *Scribner's Monthly*, xiii. 30. [2] John Clifford.

armed nation of hereditary bondsmen will see the way out of Egypt. He will, in the meek and slow-tongued Moses, confound the arrogance and assumption of the magicians of a mighty Empire. "Tell them that 'I AM' hath sent thee. Let them know that I have heard their cry. Say to the elders that 'I have visited you.' Tell them that certainly I will be with thee, and ye shall serve God in this mountain."[1]

3. The credentials which God gave to Moses are the same as Christ gave to His Church. But how often we are loth to go without better credentials than these! And yet what better *could* we have? "As my Father sent *Me* into the world, even so have I also sent *them* into the world." As we look upon the seething chaos of social hopelessness, we feel it to be well-nigh impossible to do anything great—we are so feeble, and in nature so insufficient. We feel much as Elijah did when he bent in abject despair at the brook: "I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Considered numerically, what prospect is there that the few millions of aggressive Christians will ever win over the hundreds of millions who are at present almost altogether out of sympathy with the *objects* of the Christian religion? Surely all our ferment and prayer and testimony, our martyrdom and love and self-sacrificing thought are thrown away! We are only men as they are, and must be borne down at last by numbers!

¶ A tiny volume of gas is not distinguishable from the gases we call air about it. But give to that gas in its tiny volume heat, and it becomes incandescent; and so long as gas remains with air about it, that flame gives light, in darkness ever so dense. One tiny volume enlightens many thousands of times its own space of air, because that very burning has taken place in connexion with it. So, though dark the social night in which we shine, our Gospel will be approved. We are Messengers of the King of Light, in whom is no darkness at all, and our presence is omnipotent for good, so long as He goes with us.[1]

[1] J. G. Gibson.

FORWARD!

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FORWARD!

And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.—Exod. xiv. 15.

THESE words, which were spoken at the crisis of Israel's history —at the very moment when, so to speak, Israel came into existence as a nation—were the motto stamped upon the whole subsequent history of the race.

Think when they were spoken. The children of Israel—a race of slaves who had lost all the manliness that ever they possessed, in the long period of servitude they had spent in Egypt —were called by God to go forth and realize His plans; and as this cowering band stood hearing the chariot wheels of the Egyptians behind them—at that time it was, when their hearts were sunk within them, that they turned to their leaders for guidance. Then the message came clearly forth, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."

It was a terrible moment. The Egyptian army was pressing on behind them with chariots and horsemen, and they had no means of defence. The sea lay before them, and they had no ability to cross it. They already talked of their graves, wishing that they had been prepared somewhere else than in the wilderness. The very prophet paused and was at a loss. While he rebuked his refractory people, he knew no longer how to guide them. He assured them that they should be delivered, but he could not see how that deliverance should be brought to pass. Towards them he kept a bold front, and told them that if they would "stand still, the Lord would fight for them." But his own heart was at a stand. He did not murmur like the tribes whom he led. He did not despair like them. But he remained motionless, and gave himself to supplication. Then came the Divine word to him: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the

children of Israel, that they go forward." It was an inspiriting word. It was so to him, and it may be made so to us.

¶ There is a story in the books of the old Jewish Rabbis, which tells us that the Israelites when they reached the Red Sea after their escape from Egypt were very excited. Now Israelites always were and always are rather excitable. But they were especially excitable on that occasion. They were all right when everything went well and smoothly; but when things were not going well and smoothly, and the Egyptians were hurrying up behind them and the sea was in front of them, they grew so excited that Moses had his hands full. And they all wanted to do different things; they had not yet learned to trust God and Moses in time of danger; and so they cried out all at once, giving one another different advice and wanting to do different things. Four classes especially were among them. Some said, Let us throw ourselves into the sea; others said, The best thing we can do is to go back to Egypt; others said, Let us go to meet the Egyptians and fight them; and others, Let us shout against them and see what will happen. To those who said, Let us drown ourselves in the sea, Moses said, "Fear not, but stand firm and see the salvation of the Lord." To those who wanted to get out of their trouble by going back to live in Egypt once more as slaves, Moses said, No, no, as you have seen the Egyptians to-day you shall never see them again. To those who wanted to give battle to the Egyptians he said, Restrain yourselves, "the Lord will fight for you." And those who thought that shouting would be useful were told—You be quiet. Then when he had got them all in order, Moses did what they had not thought of. He appealed to God Himself, and from Him came the command, Speak to the children of Israel, that they journey forward.[1]

¶ In a great thaw on one of the American rivers there was a man on one of the cakes of ice which was not actually separated from the unbroken ice. In his terror he did not see this, but knelt down and began to pray aloud for God to deliver him. The spectators on the shore cried, "Stop praying, and run for the shore."[2]

I.

Progress.

"Go forward." These words contain within themselves all that is to be said about human progress. They express the fact

[1] S. Singer. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

that progress is to be the law of men's affairs, that God has impressed it upon them. They explain the Divine purpose which marks itself in the story of men's affairs. We can profitably look back upon the past only if we go there to seek lessons for the future. We can profitably seek lessons for the future only if they are to bring to our hearts hope, eternal hope, greater power in the future than there has been in the past, greater zeal, greater devotion to God's service, loftier aspirations, higher aims, and the constant increase of the standard of man's endeavour.

¶ Into whatever province of Divine government we look we find that "Forward" is one of God's great watchwords—onward to that state which is higher, more perfect. "Forward" was the watchword of creation when God looked upon this earth, formless and void, and when darkness was upon the face of its deep—"Forward" until "thy face shall be covered with light and beauty, and thou shalt be the happy dwelling-place of intelligent and happy beings." "Forward" is the watchword of redemption. The stone cut out without hands should become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. The grain of mustard seed should become a great tree, amid the branches of which the fowls of the air should find shelter. The day of small things should be followed by a millennium of peace and triumph, and an eternity of glory.

¶ "That they go forward." This little word "go" is a familiar word to every follower of Christ. A true follower of His always is stirred by a spirit of "go." A going Christian is a growing Christian. A going Church has always been a growing Church. Those ages when the Church lost the vision of her Master's face on Olivet, and let other sounds crowd out of her ears the sound of His voice, were stagnant ages. They are commonly spoken of in history as the dark ages. "Go" is the ringing keynote of the Christian life, whether in man or in the Church.[1]

II.

The Direction.

In what directions should progress be made? To what are we to go forward?

1. To more *knowledge*. The first essential, in order to all other progress, is progress in knowledge, a continual pressing into

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 36.

clearer and fuller knowledge of God and of His manifold revelations of Himself. When St. Paul breathed forth his fervent wishes for the Colossian converts, his first petition was in these words: "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Similarly, when he opens his own heart to the Philippians, he speaks of counting all things but loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," and among the main objects of his desire specifies "that I may know Him." Sir Isaac Newton, towards the close of his illustrious life, spoke of himself as a child who had gathered a few shells on the shores of a boundless sea. What he felt in regard to nature, St. Paul felt in things spiritual—that there were heights above him he had not scaled, depths beneath him he had not fathomed; that rich as he was in grace, there were yet hidden in God treasures of wisdom and knowledge which would make him richer still. Secrets of Christ's love and power he had guessed at, but felt that that love and power utterly transcended his highest experience. For himself, therefore, and for those for whom he yearned, he was still covetous of more, to know more of that which passeth knowledge. And such, down through all the centuries, has been the aim and effort of the Christian life. Each generation received the measure of knowledge its predecessor had gained; but along with the old, new aspects presented themselves, not contradicting but broadening out the old, and thereupon the enlarged but unfinished structure passed on to other hands.

Spurgeon has three recommendations to give.

(1) Make great efforts to acquire information, especially of a Biblical kind. Be masters of your Bibles whatever other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. "Let the word of God dwell in you richly." Having given that the precedence, neglect no field of knowledge. The presence of Jesus on the earth has sanctified the whole realm of nature; and what He has cleansed, call not you common. All that your Father has made is yours, and you should learn from it.

¶ I begin to perceive that it is necessary to know some one thing to the bottom—were it only literature. And yet, sir, the man of the world is a great feature of this age; he is possessed of an extraordinary mass and variety of knowledge; he is every-

where at home; he has seen life in all its phases; and it is impossible but that this great habit of existence should bear fruit.[1]

(2) Learn always to discriminate between things that differ; and at this particular time this point needs insisting on very emphatically. Many run after novelties, charmed with every new thing; learn to judge between truth and its counterfeits. Others adhere to old teachings; like limpets they stick to the rock; and yet these may only be ancient errors; wherefore "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good." The use of the sieve and the winnowing fan is much to be commended. A man who has asked the Lord to give him clear eyes, by which he shall see the truth, and discern its bearings, and who, by reason of the constant exercise of his faculties, has obtained an accurate judgment, is one fit to be a leader of the Lord's host.

(3) Hold firmly what you have learned. Alas! in these times, certain men glory in being weathercocks; they hold fast nothing; they have, in fact, nothing worth the holding. "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," is the motto of the worst rather than of the best of men. Are they to be our model? "I shape my creed every week" was the confession of one of these divines to me. Whereunto shall I liken such unsettled ones? Are they not like those birds which frequent the Golden Horn, and are to be seen from Constantinople, of which it is said that they are always on the wing, and never rest? No one ever saw them alight on the water or on the land, they are for ever poised in mid-air. The natives call them "lost souls"—seeking rest and finding none; and, methinks, men who have no personal rest in the truth, if they are not themselves unsaved, are, at least, very unlikely to be the means of saving others.

> Knowledge hath two wings, Opinion hath but one,
> And Opinion soon fails in its orphan flight;
> The bird with one wing soon droops its head and falls,
> But give it two wings, and it gains its desire.[2]

2. To *higher life.* "Go forward" is a summons to individuals and to the Church to advance in Christian character. No worthy, no abiding character can be formed without a basis of belief. But on the other hand, what avails a foundation if it is

[1] R. L. Stevenson, *The Dynamiter.* [2] Jalaluddin Rumi.

not built upon? What will it avail to say or think that we are of the root if we show none of the fruit? So the command runs: Go forward, build up yourselves on your most holy faith. Stone after stone, row after row, of gracious character has to be built up with care and diligence. Add to your faith courage, and to courage knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

¶ No one reaches at once the full measure of the stature of manhood in Jesus Christ. In Him there is placed before us an ideal, infinitely perfect and beautiful, to which we may be ever drawing nearer, and still find it shining above us, like a star that dwells apart. His riches we shall never exhaust, freely as we may draw upon Him. As God has made the soul of man capable of indefinite expansion, so He has set before it in Christ a career of infinite growth and progress.[1]

¶ Schiller says it is a scientific fact that the animal nature of man, if let have its way, becomes dominant over the spiritual toward middle life; and John Henry Newman says that unless they are subdued by high religious and moral principle, material interests inevitably submerge man's whole nature into selfish indifference towards all with which self is not concerned. And Dante places man's encounter with the three animals—the fierce lion of wrath and pride; luxury, the spotted panther; and the gaunt, hungry wolf of avarice—in the middle period of man's life. There can be no doubt that men and women nearing middle age need to be roused to the necessity of keeping close to God as the only source of fresh impulse to righteousness.[2]

3. To *fuller service.* There is among us sometimes a notion that religion consists rather in passive emotions than in active deeds. As if in religion man had simply to bare his heart that it might be played on as a stringed instrument by the hand of God. As if spiritual thought and emotion were the whole of religion. That is but half the truth. Out of this inward experience must grow a life devoted to good works. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father, shall enter the kingdom."

[1] J. Legge. [2] L. A. Banks.

¶ After all, we shall be known by what we have done, more than by what we have said. I hope that, like the Apostles, our memorial will be our *acts*. There are good brethren in the world who are unpractical. The grand doctrine of the Second Advent makes them stand with open mouths, peering into the skies, so that I am ready to say, "Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye here gazing up into Heaven?" The fact that Jesus Christ is to come again is not a reason for star-gazing, but for working in the power of the Holy Ghost. Be not so taken up with speculations as to prefer a Bible-reading over an obscure passage in Revelation to teaching in a ragged-school or discoursing to the poor concerning Jesus. We must have done with day-dreams, and get to work. I believe in eggs, but we must get chickens out of them. I do not mind how big your egg is, it may be an ostrich's egg if you like; but if there is nothing in it, pray clear away the shell. If something comes of your speculations, God bless them; and even if you should go a little further than I think it wise to venture in that direction, still, if you are thereby made more useful, God be praised for it![1]

¶ Some seven centuries ago there was a young Italian keeping a feast with his friends one night; and he wearied of the feast and of the jests. There was nothing wrong, only a friendly feast. He quietly withdrew and went out and stood thoughtfully beneath the blue Italian sky. By and by his friends came out, and they walked home together, and they said to him, "You are in love." He said nothing, but he had a far-away look upon his face, like a man who is looking into another world. "You are in love. Who is it?" the friends said. "I am," he replied, "and my bride is called Poverty. No one has been anxious to woo her since Jesus lived, and I am going to serve her all my days." That young Italian became immortal as one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, under the name of St. Francis. He felt the burden of responsibility to serve the world. He lifted up his rod in God's strength and went forward.[2]

III.

The Hindrances.

What are the hindrances to progress? The history of the children of Israel suggests these three—

1. We shall not go forward if we *look back*. Jeremiah describes the people asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward.

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] L. A. Banks.

After the roll-call of God's heroes in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is the application, "Let us run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." With very many the reason they never go forward is that they live looking backward. The story of Lot's wife has a lesson for all time—turned not into salt, but into stone. Nothing is more sure to turn one to stone than to live looking back. It is to lose all sympathy with the present and all hope for the future; and that past is always distorted and deceptive. Israel was kept from going forward because they dreamed of the leeks, and garlic, and cucumber, and the sweet waters of the Nile. How conveniently they forgot the crack of the taskmaster's whip and the cruel decree that doomed their sons to death!

¶ I was on Dartmoor some years ago, when we were overtaken by a dense mist. My friend, who knew the moor well, said he would bring us straight to the point we wanted, knowing the part of the stream at which we stood and the direction in which we wanted to go. For a while we went on safely enough; then I stopped and turned to button my waterproof. He too turned for a moment to speak to me. Then instantly he cried, "I have lost my bearings. *That turn did it.* I don't know the way any longer." We went on, thinking we were right, but an hour later found ourselves back by the bank of the river we had left. We had gone in a complete circle. "Now," said he, "we can start again; but we must not stop for anything." Away we went, and he led us right across to the point we wanted. Later he explained to me that knowing the direction at the outset he kept his eye on some furze bush or rock straight before him and so led us in a fairly straight line. "If you lose that," said he, "you are sure to go in a circle."[1]

Here must the Christian onward press,
  Through toil and sweat, through foul and fair;
In days of gladness or distress
  Of looking back he must beware.

His life of grace must still advance,
  His onward gaze fixed on the goal,
With penance, ever new, enhance
  The love and virtue of his soul.

2. Another hindrance to progress is to *go round* instead of going forward. The Sunday Service, hymn, and prayer, and

[1] M. G. Pearse.

sermon, the round of observances; the daily prayer, the round of phrases. How many of us know this same disease? How many of us suffer from it? Always going on; never going farther. Always going on, but never going forward. The old failings just as they were; no victories, no new possessions, no new visions, no new hopes, no added strength, no fuller service; day after day, week after week, year after year—the same fixed round.

¶ I met with a singular occurrence during my holiday this year. I had gone for a day's fishing. The river was very low and clear, and my only hope was in crouching under the rocks and hiding myself. Suddenly as I bent down absorbed in my work, not a sound about me but the tinkle of the waterfall, or the brawl of the shallows, there came a faint bleat at my side. I looked over the rock, and there was a sheep standing deep in the water. I called to my friend who was with me, and together we lifted the poor beast up over the steep bushy bank. To our unutterable disgust, it instantly turned and flopped into the water again. Again we leaned over the bank, and lifted it out once more, and this time took care to take it far enough to be safe. At once it began to walk, but only went round and round. "What is the matter with it?" said I, recalling the West-country saying, "as maäzed as a sheep." "Oh," said my friend, "it has got the *rounders*, something the matter with the brain. They think they are going on, but they are always going round." "Poor thing," said I. "I know many people like that, only it is something the matter with the heart. They think they are going on, but they are always going round."[1]

3. A third hindrance is *fear*. Israel often looked forward, but got no farther. They said, "Their cities are walled up to heaven. The men are giants, in whose sight we are as grasshoppers," and they went back again to the dreary round in the wilderness. Now our safety is *in going on*.

¶ When I was in South Africa, I heard a humorous story—true, I may say, for it came to me at first hand. Two young men who had three days' holiday had set their hearts on riding up the country each to see the young lady to whom he was engaged. With light hearts they started, and entered the forest through which we were riding when my friend told me the story. Surrounded by the glory of the blue sky, under the shadow of the trees they were riding along briskly, when suddenly they

[1] M. G. Pearse.

were startled by a terrible roar. They pulled up their horses instantly and turned to each other. "That is a lion. No doubt about that," said one. "It is not safe to go on," said the other. Then each thought of the lady he loved so well, and begrudged that the rare holiday should be spoiled, and so they pushed on a few yards farther. Then came another roar, and again they stopped. "It is a lion—enraged too." And they dreaded to proceed. Along the path came a cheery old gentleman, who greeted them with a bright "Good-day," and then disappeared in front of them amongst the trees. They had called to him about the lion that threatened them, but he was stone deaf, and thinking only it was some pleasant observation about the weather, had nodded and gone on. Once more there came the roar. The horsemen, concerned more about the safety of him who had just left them than their own, said, "We must go and warn him. He is too deaf to hear the roar." Then was it, as they turned the corner, that they reached a round pool in the heart of the wood, and on the edge of it there sat a group of bull-frogs, whose thunder had melted the hearts of the lovers, and threatened their holiday. With a laugh at their own fright, they hastened on their way. "It is a lion," saith Fear. "We must stay." . . . But he who goes on shall find most commonly that it is but a bull-frog. Go forward.[1]

Be you still, be you still, trembling heart;
Remember the wisdom out of the old days.
He who trembles before the flame and the flood,
And the winds that blow through the starry ways,
Let the starry winds and the flame and the flood
Cover over and hide, for he hath no part
With the proud, majestical multitude.[2]

[1] M. G. Pearse. [2] W. B. Yeats.

Life in God's Presence.

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Life in God's Presence.

My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.—Exod. xxxiii. 14.

These are the words of God's assurance, anticipating an almost agonizing supplication of Moses, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." The prayer was uttered on the edge of the great wilderness. Moses was about to loose his hold on his last familiar resting-place, and commit himself and his people to its unknown wilds. All the magnitude of his great undertaking was pressing on him at that moment. "Who is sufficient for these things?" he cried, like one who, after the lapse of ages—a pilgrim of Sinai, too—set his hand to the conversion of a world. The Divine guidance was absolutely a question of life or death. Thus far the ground over which the Israelites had passed was familiar marching-ground to their great leader. Moreover, their march had been a triumphal exodus from bondage. Up to Sinai, Egypt was behind them, and they had the joyous sense that they were escaping from hated and tyrannous foes. From Sinai, Canaan was before them, and the grand difficulties and perils of their enterprise began. It was the great critical point of their course. They had need of a vision of a Divine leader, whose pillar of flame should shine, not on their march only, but in their hearts.

I.

In the Wilderness.

1. Moses was the man of Israel, the man in whom all the higher life and aim of the whole community expressed itself. We study Israel through him; and we shall get nearer to the heart of this great matter—the Lord's guidance of the host—if we listen to his wrestling supplication, in which the intercessor was uttering the cry of a whole people, and catch the words of the answer of God, than if we were to study, as we might, the

external form of the guiding angel, marvellous, miraculous, and richly symbolic as it unquestionably is. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." A grand, sublime symbol, amongst the greatest things in history. Think of it for a moment. Imagine that host winding through the dreary paths of the desert, lonely there as a people among peoples, as their Lord became lonely as a man among men; cut off utterly from all national associations and sympathies; the strongest people in the world behind them, animated by the most deadly hatred, and powerful nations in front, armed to receive them and to dispute with them every inch of the inheritance they were resolved to win; marching on along those solemn desert pathways, with the visible sign in the midst of them of the presence in person of the Lord God of the whole world. There, under the blazing rays of the burning noon, a soft cloud spread its cool shadow on the weary plain, and refreshed imagination—and what pure refreshment that is—with the picture of the shadowing love of the Lord God Almighty over the whole wearying pilgrimage and battle march of life! And then, as evening fell, and the glooms of night began to drop their awful shroud—for nightfall is awful in the lonely waste—over the weird forms and hues of those beetling cliffs, or the gaunt outlines of the desert palms, the cloud began to glow and lighten, till it cast a broad flood of living lustre, such as we see on earth only in dreams, on the whole scene of the desert encampment. It touched the spurs and peaks of the mountains, till they stood glowing like angel sentinels around the camp of God's redeemed, and filled the night watchers with some vision of what might be seen, if the veils were lifted, and all the heavenly armies appeared attending the path of God's host through battles and perils, through foaming seas and dreary deserts, to their glorious rest.

From life's enchantments,
Desire of place,
From lust of getting
Turn thou away and set thy face
Toward the wilderness.

The tents of Jacob
As valleys spread,
As goodly cedars
Or fair lign aloes, white and red,
Shall share thy wilderness.

With awful judgments,
The law, the rod,
With soft allurements
And comfortable words, will God
Pass o'er the wilderness.

The bitter waters
Are healed and sweet;
The ample heavens
Pour angel's bread about thy feet
Throughout the wilderness.

And Carmel's glory
Thou thoughtest gone,
And Sharon's roses,
The excellency of Lebanon
Delight thy wilderness.

Who passeth Jordan
Perfumed with myrrh,
With myrrh and incense?
Lo! on His arm Love leadeth her
Who trod the wilderness.[1]

But magnificent as was the sign, the thing signified transcended it. In vain would the Divine presence have been shown to them in that miraculous cloud and glory, if there had been no inner sense of the Divine presence in their hearts. It is in the communion between Moses and the Divine Leader of the host that we are admitted into the true sanctuary of that people's strength. Just so far as their spirits went with Moses in this prayer, in this yearning for the inner presence and guidance of God, did they march joyously and triumphantly on their way; and when that failed, the visible cloud of splendour helped them no longer; they dropped like blighted fruit from the living tree, and their carcases fell in the wilderness.

[1] Anna Bunston.

2. The lot of Moses was an unenviable one. He was about to quit the familiar ground, the old home of his exile, the mountain region of Horeb. The path onward lay through unknown deserts, and would most surely be beset by daring and experienced foes. It was a prospect before which even a soul of such heroic mould might quail. Would God go with him, not in a pillar of cloud, as the national leader, but as friend, companion, comrade of his spirit? Let him have that promise, and he would go bravely on. God had cast the lonely lot of this man amongst a people utterly uninstructed and unintelligent, unable to understand, indisposed to reverence his thoughts, and ever breaking in on the meditations and communings on which the fate of unborn ages was hanging, with their sensuous outcries, "Hast thou brought out this whole nation into the wilderness, that it may perish with hunger?" Here was a man, moreover, who had deeper thoughts about the Divine nature and character than any other man of his day; to whom the meaning of life and the sacredness of duty were more plain. For had he not entered into the inner court of the Divine presence, and gazed on the glory which no eye but his had prevailed to look upon, and talked with God face to face, as a man talketh with his friend? And see him there, among a people who clung to the outer court, for it was less dreadful than the inner; who had no conception of the solemnity of a Divine command, except when it was enforced by plagues; and who assailed him, when he came forth from this Divine communion, with the very glory on his countenance, full of that "favour" which is the life of men and peoples, with scornful questions about graves! Never, perhaps, was man so lonely.

¶ Supreme excellence is always lonely—the great ruler, statesman, warrior, all tread a solitary path, all alike have secrets which no other may or can share. In some degree this is true of every man. Each one travels on a solitary way. "What man knoweth the thoughts of a man?"—his hopes, his fears, his yearnings, his aspirations? God has given men their own lives to live;

> And bade betwixt their shores to be
> The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

Many of our experiences are unique, unanticipated, incommunicable. "All alone we live," and "all alone we die." God's presence means companionship, and in that companionship is

safety and strength. He knows all the way from the beginning, and with Him there can be no loneliness, no surprise, no disaster. He gives strength to walk the most lonely and difficult path.[1]

3. What are some of the lonely experiences of life which will be cheered by this wonderful Companionship?

(1) *There is the loneliness of unshared sorrow.*—Is there anything more solitary than sorrow that can find no friendly ear? Sorrow which has an audience can frequently find relief in telling and retelling its own story. How often the bereaved one can find a cordial for the pain in recalling the doings and prowess of the departed! It is a wise ministry, in visiting the bereaved, to give them abundant opportunity of speaking about the lost. The heart eases itself in such shared remembrance. Grief is saved from freezing, and the genial currents of the soul are kept in motion. But when sorrow has no companionable presence with which to commune, the grief becomes a withering and desolating ministry. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old." Ay, there is nothing ages people like the loneliness of unshared grief. And there are multitudes of people who know no friendly human ear into which they can pour the story of their woes. The outlet manward is denied them. What then? Is the desolation hopeless? "*My* presence shall go with thee." The story can be whispered into the ear of the Highest. The Companionship is from above.

¶ Said one lonely soul, who had been nursing his grief in secret, as the stricken doe seeks to hide the arrow that rankles in its breast, "I will pour out my soul unto the Lord," and in the sympathy of that great Companionship his sorrow was lightened, and transfigured, like rain clouds in the sun.

In the dark and cloudy day,
When earth's riches flee away,
And the last hope will not stay,
My Saviour, comfort me.

When the secret idol's gone,
That my poor heart yearned upon,
Desolate, bereft, alone,
My Saviour, comfort me.

[1] J. Edwards.

(2) *There is the loneliness of unshared triumph.*—Lonely triumph is as desolate as unshared grief. When I sin and falter, I feel I need a companion to whom I can tell the story of my defeat; but when I have some secret triumph I want a companion to share the glow and glory of the conquest, or the glow and glory will fade. Even when we conquer secret sin the heart calls for a Companion in the joy! And here He is! "My presence shall go with thee." If you will turn to the Book of Psalms you will find how continually the ringing pæans sound from hearts that are just bursting with the desire to share their joy and triumph with the Lord. They are the communings of victory, the gladsome fellowship of radiant souls and their God. His Presence shall go with us, and He will destroy the loneliness of unshared joy.

¶ My memory recalls with vivid clearness one of the boys in the school where I received my earliest training. He was an orphan, but more than that, he was perfectly friendless. Those who were nearest to him were all dead, and the entire interest of his guardian exhausted itself in paying the school-fees as they became due. When the holidays came, and we all bounded home, he remained at school, for he had nowhere else to go. I thought little or nothing about it. Certainly his position did not move me to pain, until one day his loneliness broke upon me with appalling reality, when in the class-lists he appeared as the premier boy in the school. His triumph was most distinguished and brilliant, but he had no one to share it! No father, no mother, no kinsman, no friend! I felt that in his success he was more desolate than in his defeats! His bereavement seemed to culminate in his triumphs.

¶ I had a friend who in mature life published a book on which he had bestowed the hard labours of many years. Some time before its publication his wife died, and he was left alone. The book received an enthusiastic welcome, and now enjoys high eminence in its own department of learning. I spoke to my friend of his well-deserved reward, and of the triumph of his labours. His face immediately clouded, and he quietly said, "Ah, if only she were here to share it!" I say, his loneliness culminated there, and his sharpest pang was experienced in his sunniest hour.[1]

(3) *There is the loneliness of temptation.*—Our friends can

[1] J. H. Jowett.

accompany us so far along the troubled way, and by God's good grace they can partially minister to our progress by re-arranging our environment, and removing many of the snares and pitfalls from our path. But in this serious business of temptation it is little that friend can do for friend. The great battle is waged behind a door they cannot enter. But we need not be alone! One Presence can pass the door that leads to the secret place. "My presence shall go with thee," not as an interested or applauding spectator, but as Fellow-worker, Fellow-fighter, Redeemer, and Friend. The loneliness of the wilderness is peopled by the ubiquitous presence of the Lord.

¶ Every soul that has had any moral experience whatever must know that the best elements in his composition are those derived from passages in his life where no second could keep his soul company—where he must be alone; disappointments that he must suffer alone; reflections where he must look to his own soul and his God alone. Two conditions have affixed themselves to the history of moral reformers and heroes: they have first been overshadowed by the great ideas for the redemption of humanity which have filled their souls, in solitary thinking; and when they have gone out on their beneficent errands, they have had to work alone—confront apathy and opposition unsupported by the sympathies of any multitude.[1]

(4) *And there is the loneliness of death.*—It is pathetic, deeply pathetic, how we have to stand idly by at the last moment—doctor, nurse, husband, wife, child—all to stand idly by, when the lonely voyager launches forth into the unknown sea! "It is the loneliness of death that is so terrible. If we and those whom we love passed over simultaneously, we should think no more of it than changing our houses" from one place to another. But every voyager goes alone! Alone? Nay, there is a Fellow-voyager! "My presence shall go with thee." The last, chill loneliness is warmed by the Resurrection Life. There is a winsome light in the valley, as of the dawning of grander days. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

¶ He had of course his ups and downs during this time.

[1] F. D. Huntington, *Christian Believing and Living*, 208.

He was in full practice, leading his life as before, but whenever we found ourselves alone together he was serious, and, though he did not again refer to his health, he never played the parts of the author, inflated or distressed, or did any of the other things which used to make my occasional Wednesday afternoon walks with him so delightful. One thing I do remember: during a walk home from the House he suddenly asked me what I took to be the most melancholy lines in English poetry. Being accustomed to such conundrums from him, I was not much surprised, and answered that, on the spur of the moment, I could think of none more melancholy, considering Swift's genius for friendship, than those lines of his written in sickness in Ireland—

'Tis true—then why should I repine
To see my life so fast decline?
But why obscurely here alone
Where I am neither loved nor known?
My state of health none care to learn,
My life is here no soul's concern,
And those with whom I now converse
Without a tear will tend my hearse.

I spouted these lines, melancholy though they are, light-heartedly enough, and was completely taken aback by the effect they produced upon my companion. He stopped in his walk, exclaiming several times with a strange emphasis, "Horrible! horrible! horrible!" and twice added, "I'm not like that." I could only bite my lips and wish I had thought of some other lines.[1]

Whene'er goes forth Thy dread command,
And my last hour is nigh,
Lord, grant me in a Christian land,
As I was born, to die.

I pray not, Lord, that friends may be,
Or kindred, standing by,—
Choice blessing! which I leave to Thee
To grant me or deny.

But let my failing limbs beneath
My Mother's smile recline;
And prayers sustain my labouring breath
From out her sacred shrine.

[1] Augustine Birrell, *Sir Frank Lockwood*, 191.

Thou, Lord, where'er we lie, canst aid;
But He, who taught His own
To live as one, will not upbraid
The dread to die alone.[1]

4. Interpreters in all times and of all shades of religious belief have agreed in finding in the wilderness a type of life. The type, however, covers only a partial aspect of life, and it is not on the wilderness aspect alone that we must dwell when we think of life in its fulness and continuity. The old spirit of Stoicism may enter unduly even in our day, to the spoiling of life as God gave it, although at the present time it is not so much a spirit of sternness as a spirit of indifference which finds in life nothing but a wilderness. To be an enthusiast is not fashionable. I cannot do this because I am bored, is too often the answer to the old heathen question, Is life worth living? But this is not the way in which we are to apply the type. The wilderness was only a passing phase in Israel's life's history, and even this was not without its spots of brightness. A prophet—perhaps one who had himself passed through the Exile—could sing, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." It was hope that transformed the prophet's wilderness, and it is hope that will transform ours. And if we ask, Whence does this hope come? surely we find the answer in the words spoken to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." It is God's abiding presence with the soul which teaches it to know the dignity of a life lived in communion with Him, the continuity of which, begun here, can never be broken off through eternity. "In thy presence," says the Psalmist, "is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. xvi. 11).

¶ I shall give only one of Dr. Rainy's stories, which I think has never been published. It concerned two saintly fathers of the Disruption—the dignified Dr. Gordon of the High Church and the quaint Dr. Bruce of St. Andrew's Church. The two were conducting or had just conducted a joint service, which had been peculiarly inspiring and uplifting. Dr. Gordon, who had a manner almost majestically grave, in hushed solemn tones whispered to the other, "Is not this a foretaste of Paradise?"

[1] J. H. Newman.

To which Dr. Bruce replied: "'Deed, I was jist nippin' mysel' tae mak' sure I wasna oot o' the body."[1]

II.

The Presence of God.

"My presence shall go with thee."

Moses was promised not only guidance, but *personal friendship.* "*My presence*" means literally "*My Face.*" He was to have always with him a personal Companionship. He was to hold converse face to face, eye to eye, with One who was strong enough to meet all his demands for guidance, succour, and strength. What he should enjoy should be no mere superintendence, as from a distant heaven. An everlasting Friend should travel with him along the desert, and sit with him in his tent, and accompany him to the council, and to the seat of justice, and amidst the rebellious concourse, and to the field of battle with heathen foes, giants, and others, when the time should come. He should experience the infinite difference of being never alone, never without a personal Presence, perfectly sympathetic, and at the same time almighty.

How is the presence of God to be realized in the Christian life?

1. Think, first of all, what *the presence of God is in the individual Christian's life.* How infinitely more it means to us than it could have meant to Moses. To him it meant a signal honour for his people, a separation from all nations by the fact that God was with them, that they were the Lord's host and God their Captain, their earthly leader only His vicegerent. In the fact of the Incarnation we bow before a greater mystery, we receive a higher gift, than patriarch or prophet or Old Testament saint could dream of. In the finished work of God the Son, human life has been transformed. In baptism we are separated, far more than ever Israel was—separated not as a nation overshadowed by God's presence, but as those who by the grace of union have been united with God. No outward visible sign of cloud or fire, but the inward reality of a new life is ours. God

[1] P. Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, ii. 97.

and man are no longer separated as they were before Christ came. They are one in Him "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead," while yet He has taken our nature upon Him. And that Presence of God is ever renewed to us in the sacrament of love. When we dwell with Christ and Christ with us, we are one with Christ; while if so be that deadly sin has separated us from that supernatural Presence, Christ has Himself ordained and blessed the ministry of reconciliation whereby the penitent is restored to grace. The whole meaning and purpose of Christianity is to assure to man the Presence of God, removing that separating barrier which sin has raised, destroying sin *for* us by the Atonement, killing down sin *in* us by the power of Divine grace. Pardon and life are the two needs of man's spiritual nature, the two gifts of God in Christ, whereby the Presence of God is secured to us.

2. But there is a danger in our day that this great gift of God should be lost to us almost without our knowing it. We have made a break with the past which synchronizes in the case of most of us with the first dawn of intellectual activity; we are learning to think for ourselves, and at the moment when we want the calmest judgment and the coolest head we feel for the first time, in their full strength, the special temptations of early manhood; we are surrounded by a life which ministers to self-indulgence, and is hostile to stern moral discipline. We have learnt perhaps the A B C of philosophy, and already feel ourselves competent to make for ourselves our religious creed. But religion is not made—it grows or dies. A made religion does not live. It is true, no doubt, that something of reconstruction must take place in the case of every one who thinks. The faith which we were taught as children, and unhesitatingly received, must become ours in a different sense if it is to go with us through life. It has to be brought into relation with the new truths of science, of philosophy, of criticism, which are flowing in upon us. We cannot keep it as the only part of our intellectual heritage which must not be examined, hidden away in some sacred place. But it is one thing to try to see the old truths in the light of the new knowledge; it is another, as it were, to sweep away the old and begin afresh. And this is what men so often do. And

before long they discover that the Presence of God, which was with them in the old life, is not with them now. They thought they might drop the practice of religion till they had made a place for it in their new theory of life; and resume it when the reconstruction was complete. And they find they cannot; though there is still the longing for Him who made us for Himself, in whom alone our hearts can rest. It is in vain then that they attempt to fill the void with that God to whom the speculative reason, in abstraction from conscience, leads us. No one wants or cares for an abstract first cause. What the soul needs is a Living God, an invisible personality behind the veil of things we see, who can be to us both a Brother in sympathy and a sincere object of worship. "The only God," it has been said, "whom Western Europeans, with a Christian ancestry of a thousand years behind them, can worship, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or rather of St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and of the innumerable blessed saints, canonized or not, who peopled the ages of faith." And religion stands or falls with the belief in a personal God, and the possibility of communion with Him.

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good:
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.[1]

3. In the wider life of the Church we are called upon to face a similar difficulty. The promise of God's Presence is what it has always been, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam.*

the world." But it is impossible to shut our eyes to the fact that the life of the Church is entering on a new phase. The old days of protection are going, if not gone, and men in their little faith think that religion is going too. A great wave of secularism seems to be passing over our land and beating against the temporal bulwarks of our national Christianity. And men, good men and true in their personal relations with God, men who have learned to see His Presence and His Hand in all the changes of their own lives, are getting anxious and doubtful or desponding as if God's promise to His Church had failed. But in the controversies of the Church in every age, as in the struggles of our own individual lives, it is impatience that leads men from the truth. We are tempted to a reckless abandonment of eternal principles because in their traditional setting they do not fit the present need. But you cannot make a new religion. It is not by abandoning the Christian faith, but by being true to the faith we hold, that we shall reach the religion of the future. Amidst all the changes of the sixteenth century, when the Church was driven from the shade of the monastery to the broad daylight of the world, not one article of Christian faith was lost or left behind. And if we are to judge the future by the past, those whom God will choose to guide His Church through the crisis of the present age will be neither men who, panic-struck and despairing, shrink from change, nor those who recklessly abandon the ancient faith for some nineteenth-century *nostrum*; but real men, who, not being like children carried away with every "blast of vain doctrine," have the strength to face the problem. It will be those who in all the changes and struggles of their own spiritual lives can trace the guiding hand of God, and therefore in the wider issues of the Church at large are strong enough to rest and wait, ready to face the grey and shivering dawn of a new era, yet true to the ancient Christian faith, and strong in the promised presence of their God.

III.

REST.

"I will give thee rest."

There are two possible sorts of rest. One is rest *after* toil, the lying down of the weary, at the end of the march, on the

morrow of the battle, on the summit of the hill. The other is rest *in* toil, the internal and deep repose and liberty of a spirit which has found a hidden refuge and retreat, where feeling is calm and disengaged, while the march, the battle, the climb, are still in full course. This last was the promise to Moses. Another day, a distant day, was to come when he should taste the endless rest *after* toil, when he should sink down on Pisgah in the arms of the Lord, and (to quote the beautiful legendary phrase) should die—if death it could be called—by His kiss. But now he was to taste the wonderful rest *in* toil. He was to traverse that last long third of his vast and memorable life, thinking, ruling, guiding, bearing, under the Divine enabling condition of the inward rest of God, passing understanding.

¶ Of course, the conscious presence of God with us is possible only on three conditions.

Firstly, we must walk in the light, as He is in the light; for He will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, or turn aside to go with us on any crooked path of our own choosing.

Secondly, we must recognize that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son constantly cleanseth us from all sin; not only that which we judge and confess, but that also which is seen only by His pure and holy eyes.

Thirdly, we must claim the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit, to make real that presence, which is too subtle for the eye of man, unless it be specially enlightened.[1]

1. *Rest in toil.*—The longing of man's spirit amid all the strifes, discords, and confusions of life is for rest. Nothing can eradicate man's conviction that strife and discord have no right in the universe; that they are abnormal; that the normal condition of things and beings is harmony, and that harmony is the music of rest. God must rest—rest even in working; and all that is of God, and from God, has the longing and the tending to rest. Perhaps some dull notion that they will have more rest in the life of the world, that they will escape many cares and distractions, and, at any rate, be at peace in sin, lies at the bottom of many a backsliding to Egypt in human hearts. No man at first is content to let the question alone—to leave the riddle of life unread. Hence arises the long discord in him who

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Moses the Servant of God*, 138.

has not found the principle of the Divine harmony: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit striveth against the flesh, and the two are contrary the one to the other." We long to find some truth which shall release us from the agony, and make some kind of harmony in our lives. We find this battle of life inexplicable; it sometimes shakes our faith in the wisdom and goodness of our God. We shout into the Sibyl cave and listen for the responses; we take the whispers of sense for the answer, and then we go on our way. But the conflict again begins, the perplexities again return; again and again we cry, each time in a more frenzied mood, "Who will show us any good?" "Who will give us rest?" From the midst of the glow of glory which surrounds the throne, the word of the Son of God, the great Captain of the human host, comes down to every earnest, struggling spirit: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

¶ Perhaps there are no words that appeal more to the human heart, or fall with a sweeter cadence on the human ear, into whatever language they may be translated, than the words of our Lord recorded by St. Matthew (xi. 28–30): "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The whole secret of rest is there, not a rest of idleness, but *a rest in bearing Christ's yoke.* And He adds, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

¶ An aged, weary woman, carrying a heavy basket, got into the train with me the other day, and when she was seated she still kept the heavy burden upon her arm! "Lay your burden down, mum," said the kindly voice of a working man. "Lay your burden down, mum; the train will carry both it and you." Ay, that's it! "Lay your burden down!" The Lord will carry both it and you! "I will give thee rest": not by the absence of warfare, but by the happy assurance of victory: not by the absence of the hill, but by the absence of the spirit of fainting. "I will give thee rest."[1]

Rest is not quitting
The busy career;
Rest is the fitting
Of self to its sphere.

[1] J. H. Jowett.

'Tis the brook's motion,
  Clear without strife,
Fleeing to ocean
  After its life.

Deeper devotion
  Nowhere hath knelt;
Fuller emotion
  Heart never felt.

'Tis loving and serving
  The highest and best!
'Tis onward! Unswerving—
  And that is true rest.[1]

2. *Rest after toil.*—Rest in toil carries with it the promise of a fuller and more perfect rest after toil. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Art thou so weary then, poor thirsty soul?
  Have patience, in due season thou shalt sleep.
  Mount yet a little while, the path is steep:
Strain yet a little while to reach the goal:
Do battle with thyself, achieve, control:
  Till night come down with blessed slumber deep
  As love, and seal thine eyes no more to weep
Through long tired vigils while the planets roll.
Have patience, for thou too shalt sleep at length,
  Lapt in the pleasant shade of Paradise.
  My Hands that bled for thee shall close thine eyes,
  My Heart that bled for thee shall be thy rest:
I will sustain with everlasting strength,
  And thou, with John, shalt lie upon My breast.[2]

[1] John Sullivan Dwight. [2] Christina G. Rossetti.

Unconscious Glory.

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Unconscious Glory.

And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai . . . that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him.—Exod. xxxiv. 29.

Whatever view we take of the manner in which God communicated to Moses those moral truths which are contained in the Ten Commandments, we cannot fail to recognize the grandeur and the importance of the event. The lawgiver ascending in sublime solitude the mountain, from whose base the multitude and their flocks were far removed—the forty days of intimate colloquy with God—the cloud of the Divine Presence surrounding the hilltop—the power of a Divine illumination glowing with such splendour that the people shrank from the lawgiver's pure bright gaze—these are, as it were, the solemn surroundings of an event which marks an epoch in the world's history. To this day, those Ten Commandments are the basis of our national jurisprudence, and the tests and guides of our personal morality.

I.

In the Mount.

1. *Mountains.*—It is perhaps impossible to estimate the influence which mountains have on the thought and imagination of a religious mind. There is a solemn grandeur about mountain scenery which projects an impress upon life and character. The summit of a mountain is instinctively connected in the human mind with thoughts of God and an approach to the Infinite. Throughout the Bible there is abundant illustration of this mountain influence. The ancient Hebrew poets dwelt among the mountains. Mountains filled their imagination and inspired their songs. Nature taught them to love the mountains and to find in them a meeting-place with God.

¶ Both in the life of Moses and in the life of Christ, mountains were the scene of many of the most signal events of their histories. Like two rivers, the secrets of their power are up among the silent hills. Horeb, with its flaming bush, Sinai's rugged peaks, invested with dark clouds of the Divine glory, Pisgah, commanding the extended landscape of Canaan's fertile valleys and fruitful slopes, and Nebo, where he went up to die, are mountains that correspond in the life of Moses to Hattin and Hermon, the lowly Calvary and beautiful Olivet, in the life of Christ. It was on those meeting-places of earth and heaven, far above all noise and din of men, that Moses so often spoke with God, and received strength for his arduous mission, and it was in the solitude of the hills—not rugged, fire-coloured, beetling cliffs like those of the desert, but hills mantled with foliage, around whose breast the vine threw her tendrils, and on whose brow the olive and the pine held the harp of their branches to the winds—it was in the solitude of such hills that the Son of Man wrestled in His nightly prayer, and held those deep communings with His Father which renewed His strength. God has dignified those grand temples, eloquent in silence, with events far more sublime than their own majesty, and far more awe-inspiring than their own stupendous forms.

We lingered long, for dearer
  Than home were the mountain places
Where God from the stars dropt nearer
  Our pale, dreamy faces.

Our very hearts from beating
  We stilled in awed delight,
For spirit and children were meeting
  In the purple, ample night.[1]

2. *Moses a man of prayer.*—To a man who trusts in God responsibility must always be an impetus to prayer. And so it was in the life of Moses. We cannot read the story in the early books of the Bible without having the truth brought very closely home that Moses was a man of prayer. He never forgot the need of supplication, of asking God to help him in every hour of his difficulties as he led the children of Israel through the many trials of the wilderness. He never forgot that he was in God's hands. He did not think of how he himself could gain

[1] A. E., *The Divine Vision*, 56.

honour, but he remembered that we must seek first the honour and glory of God. And so throughout his life he was one who spent much time in God's presence, and all this had an effect upon his character.

3. *Moses in communion with God.*—Prayer, in its most perfect form, is communion with God. It is in communion with God that every soul finds satisfaction for its highest needs, and there is also a sense in which all who are called upon to lead Christ's flock must experience a greater need than those who are led. How keenly this need is sometimes felt by us may be fitly expressed in the words of Longfellow—

> O blessed Lord! how much I need
> Thy light to guide me on my way!
> So many hands, that, without heed,
> Still touch thy wounds, and make them bleed!
> So many feet, that, day by day,
> Still wander from thy fold astray!
> Unless thou fill me with thy light,
> I cannot lead thy flock aright;
> Nor, without thy support, can bear
> The burden of so great a care,
> But am myself a castaway.

4. Having come down from the Mount, Moses stands before us in the glory of *a spiritual transfiguration.* What transfigured him? In the answer to this question lies the grand secret of his life. Communion with God: that was what transfigured him, and gave him power. As Moses stands before us with his shining face, he is a spiritual and refined image of the highest dream of aspiring humanity.

¶ When Michael Angelo had finished his famous colossal statue of David, "the giant," many of his friends who had not seen him during the years when he was working upon it in Florence declared with great surprise that he was changed; his face was changed. And as they looked at the statue, and then at the skilful chiseller, it was seen that he had carved his conception of David, not only into the beautiful white stone, but also, all unconsciously, into the lines of his own beautified, ennobled face.[1]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 25.

II.

He wist not.

1. "When Moses came down from the Mount, he wist not that the skin of his face shone by reason of God's speaking with him." It is strange that while the multitude recognized the intense spiritual emotion which shone through his flesh—a reflex of the radiance of the face of God—Moses himself was unconscious of it. "He wist not that the skin of his face shone." Few and simple as those words are, there could be none grander written to the memory of a hero. The noblest and loftiest character is assuredly that of the man who is so absorbed in the divine nature of his calling, and so conscious of the need of those for whom he labours, that he becomes forgetful of the beauty in his character which others recognize, and almost unconscious that he is himself the worker. And so we picture Moses, descending from the Mount into the midst of the people, beautiful with the divine beauty of holiness — the glory of God shining through his features—yet all unconscious of his beauty.

¶ I think the story of the radiance upon the face of Moses may remind us profitably that *to forget ourselves* is often the most effective way of impressing others. Moses went up to the mountain with a burdened mind, the thought of his nation lying on his heart, and following him even in his moments of devotion. It was for their sake he prayed. He came down with a fresh zeal and insight to that people, but in the noble simplicity of his nature he was unconscious of how radiant and impressive his personality had become. He was not thinking about impressiveness or popularity. What occupied him was a sheer sense of duty to God and man. He wist not that the skin of his face shone.[1]

¶ The change, says Sister Agatha, was so remarkable that she could scarcely believe her eyes. She heard what the man said, but her mind was dazed by the look in his face. It was not the same man. The very features were changed. "I shall never forget that moment, and neither will you, Mr. Taylor!" she exclaims, turning to him with loving remembrance. "We prayed together, and we were very happy, were we not? It was a true case of 'Once I was blind, now I see.' The light

[1] J. Moffatt.

came suddenly, in a moment, and all was changed." She turns to me. "His face was transfigured. It was *shining*."[1]

2. We learn three things from Moses with regard to the beauty of holiness. First, it shines; secondly, it shines by reflection; and thirdly, it shines in a way of which the subject himself is unconscious.

(1) *The beauty of holiness is a beauty which shines.*—The truth is, of course, a familiar one. Over and over again we meet with the same thought in Scripture as denoting a fact which is at once the believer's high privilege and his bounden duty. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come"—so runs the herald message in Old Testament prophecy. "Let your light shine before men," said He who Himself was the world's light. "Among whom," says St. Paul, "ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." In consistency with the same idea, ministers are called "stars," and the churches "candlesticks": so plain is it that this special aspect of the saint's life is never lost sight of—its power of self-evidence, its capacity to betray and diffuse itself, so that its existence may somehow be felt, and its influence be somehow recognized.

¶ The science of physiognomy tells us how the various qualities of intellect and the different dispositions and emotions of the soul are expressed in the facial features; so that you can, to some extent at least, read a man's temperament in his complexion and measure his intelligence by the gleam in his eye. And the spiritual nature infallibly expresses itself by signs and symbols not less legible. A rapture always bewrays itself. Faith is written upon the brow. Hope beams in every eye-glance. Patience is registered in the lips' placid repose. All happy people are beautiful while they are happy. The effect is unconscious to the subject of it, but it is not imperceptible to the observer. Sanctity can never be a secret. The holy life is a perpetual evangel, and a perennial benediction.[2]

¶ Lady Westmoreland thus writes of Jenny Lind's singing: "When the time came for her song—I do not know what it was—my mother used to say it was the most extraordinary appearance she ever remembered. The wonderful notes came ringing out, but over and above that was the wonderful *transfiguration*, no other word could apply, which came over her entire face and figure, lighting them up with the whole fire and dignity of her

[1] Harold Begbie, *In the Hand of the Potter*, 266. [2] J. Halsey.

genius. The effect on the audience was simply marvellous, and to the last day of her life my mother used to recall it vividly and its effect upon her. When she reached home my father asked her, 'Well, what do you think of Meyerbeer's wonder?' She answered, 'She is simply an angel.' 'Is she so very handsome?' 'I saw a plain girl when I went in; but when she began to sing her face literally shone like that of an angel. I never *saw* anything or heard anything the least like it.'"[1]

¶ You have seen those porcelain transparencies which, when the light is on them, are only roughnesses and wrinkles, unmeaning ridges and deep dusty shadows. But when the light is through them, what a transformation! Now, it is some "human face divine," or an exquisite landscape, or a group of lovely flowers. So there are faces which, when the light shines only on them, are what is called "plain." But when the light shines through them, it is "as though it had been the face of an angel."

(2) *It is a beauty which shines by reflection.*—Pass from the nature of this beauty to the secret of it. Once and again this phenomenon of a physical change is met with in Scripture, and nowhere is it mentioned save in connexion with one and the same fact as its reason—immediate communion with God. Take the case of the Saviour on the Mount. The fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and glistering, till the glory dazzled the disciples above, and attracted the multitudes below. What had His occupation been? He had been holding fellowship with His Father in prayer. So, too, in Gethsemane. There was a transfiguration there, and a brightness all over His face; for when He stepped from the shadow to confront the mob, the vision was such that they all reeled backward, and fell to the ground. This was just when He had wrestled with God and attained, amid strong crying and tears, the blessing of a peace passing all understanding. So, too, with Stephen, whose face in the council chamber, and doubtless also in death, was to them that beheld as the face of an angel. The transfiguration took place while God gave him grace to look up and behold an open heaven and a waiting Christ. And so it was with Moses. He attained this beauty by looking on God; his countenance was such that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly behold it, because it was the reflected glory of God. The radiance had

[1] W. W. Tulloch, "Picture Point and Parable," in *Sunday School*, iii. 307.

been caught by him during the "forty days and forty nights" in the lonely mountain where the Lord spoke to him "face to face as a man speaketh to his friend." The secret of all Christian shining is the same. Communion with God—that is the source it must spring from, lending sanctity to the character, and beauty to the very face. To see God's face is to shine; to keep seeing it is to keep shining. It is thus that the marvel of the story is repeated, and God's praying saints come forth from this privacy with their faces aglow; and the dying grow luminous on their beds, till the watchers wonder. And where is there brightness like the brightness of heaven? They are all lustrous there. "Then shall the righteous," it is said, "shine forth in their heavenly Father's kingdom."

> How lovely seems the sun to us,—at night,
> When his soft light dawns on us from the moon!
> 'Tis the sun's light and not the moon's, although
> She is so near, and he has dropped from sight.
> Hast thou done some good deed, and therefore now
> A human face smiles on thee through its tears,—
> Then see there, too, the Godhead's mediate face,
> Soft-beaming as the *solar-lunar* light.[1]

(3) *It is an unconscious beauty.*—Moses "wist not that his face shone." That is the supreme height of spiritual loveliness: to be lovely, and not to know it. Surely this is a lesson we all need to learn. Virtue is so apt to become self-conscious, and thus to lose its glow. Take the grace of humility. Humility is very beautiful when we see it unimpaired. It is exquisite with the loveliness of Christ. But there is a self-conscious humility which is only a very subtle species of pride. It is possible to boast of our humility. There are men and women whose only source of pride appears to be their modesty. How often we meet with men who, when requested to do some service, immediately hoist the flag of their humility, and declare that they are of the humble sort, and prefer to keep in the shade! Humility takes the lowest place, and does not know that her face shines. Pride can take the lowest place, and find her delight in the thought of her presumably shining face. Self-consciousness always tends to

[1] A Layman's Breviary.

sour humility, and pervert it into pride. "Moses wist not that his face shone."

¶ In all regions of life, the consummate apex and crowning charm of excellence is unconsciousness of excellence. Whenever a man begins to suspect that he is good he begins to be bad; and every virtue and beauty of character is robbed of some portion of its attractive fairness when the man who bears it knows, or fancies that he knows, it. The charm of childhood is its perfect unconsciousness, and the man has to win back the child's heritage, and become as a little child, if he would enter into and dwell in the Kingdom of Heaven. And so in the loftiest region of all, that of the religious life, you may be sure that the more a man is like Christ, the less he knows it; and the better he is, the less he suspects it. The reasons why that is so point, at the same time, to the ways by which we may attain to this blessed self-oblivion. Let us, then, try to lose ourselves in Jesus Christ. That way of self-oblivion is emancipation and blessedness and power.[1]

¶ We are told in the Life of Peter Thompson of the East London Mission that a lady who had worked most successfully for many years with him was going to the Foreign Field, and it was on the paucity of results in her work amongst East London girls that she turned her eyes. She was depressed, and as a send-off the superintendent suggested a supper for a very large number of girls of the class amongst whom she had moved—a supper such as the one with which she had inaugurated her work. He was prepared to spend a goodly sum to make the evening a success. In a week or so she returned in perplexity. The number he had mentioned of such girls was not forthcoming. He said not a word until the worker realized the position. She, in company with others, had been instrumental in altering the character of that particular neighbourhood, and slowly but with insistence, the truth took hold of her that her work had not been in vain.[2]

The Man that went the cloud within
  Is gone and vanished quite;
He cometh not, the people cries,
  Nor bringeth God to sight:
Lo these thy gods, that safety give,
  Adore and keep the feast!
Deluding and deluded cries
  The Prophet's brother-Priest:
And Israel all bows down to fall
  Before the gilded beast.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] R. B. Thompson, *Peter Thompson*, 135.

Devout, indeed! that priestly creed,
O Man, reject as sin;
The clouded hill attend thou still,
And him that went within.
He yet shall bring some worthy thing
For waiting souls to see;
Some sacred word that he hath heard
Their light and life shall be;
Some lofty part, than which the heart
Adopt no nobler can,
Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe,
And thou shalt do, O Man![1]

[1] Clough, *Poems*, 19.

The Continual Fire.

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The Continual Fire.

Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually; it shall not go out.—Lev. vi. 13.

Ancient religion spoke much by emblem and symbol. Words were not its sole medium of communication with men. Its faith did not come by hearing alone. All the senses were more or less employed as a door of utterance, and observances and ceremonies appealing to the imagination were used to awaken and direct devout feeling and thought. Its symbolism was no mere priestly invention and device; it sprang from and it met a real human need. Then, as now,

> Words there are none
> For the heart's deepest things,

and hence, of course, ceremony had its natural and legitimate place in the vocabulary of religion as of love. Then, as now, men could not live by the prophet's message alone: the aspirations of the soul could not always be translated into the dialect of the understanding; spiritual passion demanded other vehicles of expression than the common forms of speech; carved wood and stone, altar and fire and sacrifice, movement and music and colour, were used to speak the word of God and the soul's sincere desire; and stately services made great ideas vivid and impressive in a way not otherwise possible. Then, as now, things material and temporal were types of things spiritual and eternal; and religion as an institution was made to develop, to quicken and nourish religion as a life. Even the most spiritual and best of ancient religions made free use of this symbolic language; spoke to its children in acted parables, and exhibited dramatically the lessons which it was charged to convey. It loved to enact its instructions, picturing them as upon a canvas, displaying them as upon a stage from generation to generation.

But man, the twofold creature, apprehends
The twofold manner, in and outwardly,
And nothing in the world comes single to him,
A mere itself,—cup, column, or candlestick,
All patterns of what shall be in the Mount;
The whole temporal show related royally,
And built up to eterne significance
Through the open arms of God.[1]

The ritual custom of which our text speaks is one beautiful and instructive in itself, and full of large suggestion—long since dead as to the letter, but living still as to the spirit. The allusion is to the altar of burnt-offering in the court of the Tabernacle. It was concerning this altar and offering that the instruction was given that the fire should ever be kept burning and not be suffered to go out—an enactment well fitted to convey and to make clear and impressive the idea and duty of maintaining without break or interruption the worship and service of the living and true God in the life of Israel and in the life of every Israelite.

Let us ask three questions—

I. What is the fire?
II. How is it kindled?
III. How is it maintained?

I.

What is the Fire?

Among some of the ancient heathen nations, fire was kept constantly burning as a religious symbol. Thus among the Persians (and among the Parsees of India to this day) fire was, and is, the visible representation of the Godhead; and the continual burning of it the emblem of eternity. The perpetual fire of Vesta ("the oldest goddess") among the Greeks and Romans was the emblem of the inmost, purest warmth of life which unites family and people—the hearth, as it were, the heart of a house or of a State. But we shall be led astray from the true significance of the ever-burning of the altar fire if we fix our

[1] E. B. Browning, *Aurora Leigh*.

attention chiefly upon the "fire" itself, upon the fire, that is, apart from the altar. If we would get at the real meaning of this symbol, we must contemplate it in its inseparable connexion with "the altar." It was not mere "fire" that was to be kept perpetually burning, but the fire of "the altar"—"the fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually."

Consider the significance of the various sacrifices which were required to be offered upon the altar. They consisted of three kinds, viz. sin-offerings, burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings. The first of these, the "sin-offering," typified the death of the offerer to sin and self, through and by means of "the one offering for sins for ever," which was to be offered by Jesus Christ. The "burnt-offering" symbolized the life of the offerer dedicated to God; just as the fire wholly consumed the burnt-offering, so the life of the offerer was to ascend up before God in living consecration to His will. And "the peace-offering" was intended to set forth the privilege which the pardoned and consecrated believer enjoys of fellowship with God and with His people. May we not gather from this the signification of the command, "The fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually"? Is it not this—viz. that what was signified by the sacrifices of the altar was to be the unceasing experience of God's people? In other words, by the fire being constantly kept burning upon the altar was denoted the unceasing, uninterrupted character of the spiritual state or life which was indicated by the sacrifices of the altar.

1. The fire on the altar, therefore, denotes that *inner life of reverence and love*, trust and consecration and loyalty towards God which constitutes the religious spirit and creates the truly religious character.

2. The fire on the altar is not the outward acts of devotion, but *the spirit which expresses itself in these acts.* By multitudes the religious life is looked upon as consisting or made up of a series of religious duties or acts of worship continually repeated. It is thought that those are undoubtedly religious who are conscientious in the performance of the public and private duties of religion as they recur. But this is an utter misconception of the true nature of the religious life. We may be most exact in our discharge of the external duties of religion and yet be

utterly devoid of true religion itself. Were not the Pharisees of our Lord's day as diligent as it was possible to be in all these duties? and yet, did not our Lord say to His disciples, "For I say unto you that, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and of the Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven"? And so, too, the apostle speaks of some whom he describes as "having a form of godliness"—a phrase which, of course, includes a diligent attention to the externals of religion—but who, nevertheless, "deny the power thereof." No; true religion consists not in the intermittent practice of religious duties, but in the ceaseless burning of the fire of devotion to the will of God.

3. The fire on the altar *transforms every act and makes it an act of devotion.* Just as the sun shining upon the dark drops of falling rain transforms them into shining prisms of rainbow beauty, so "the fire" of the "ever-burning" Christian life renders everything done by the Christian a spiritual act, well-pleasing in the sight of God. "Whatsoever toucheth the altar," says Moses, "shall be holy." Even things so common as "bulls and goats, and doves and flour and oil" became "holy" by mere contact with "the altar." And, in like manner, the earthly duties of the man who is truly living to God are rendered holy; for "the fire" of devotion to the will of God is "ever burning" on the altar of his heart. Charles Wesley has well caught the spirit of the text in his hymn—

O Thou, who camest from above
  The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
  On the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn
  With inextinguishable blaze;
And trembling to its source return
  In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire,
  To work, and speak, and think for Thee,
Still let me guard the holy fire,
  And still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat;
Till death Thy endless mercy seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

4. In what spheres of life is the devotional spirit to be manifested?

(1) *In the Personal Life.*—In that temple of God which we each are, upon the altar of the personal heart and life, the fire of devout desire and affection ought ever to be kept burning and never allowed to go out.

There is a secret place of rest
God's saints alone may know;
Thou shalt not find it east nor west,
Though seeking to and fro.
A cell where Jesus is the door,
His Love the only key;
Who enter will go out no more,
But there with Jesus be.

If thou hadst dwelt within that place,
Then would thine heart the while,
In vision of the Saviour's face,
Forget all other smile;
Forget the charm earth's waters had
If once thy foot had trod
Beside the river that makes glad
The city of our God.

(2) *In the Home.*—Religion is necessary to the home. A house where we merely lodge and eat together is not a home; and a home, though it may have all things else—love, friendship, comfort, refinement—does not fulfil its true idea unless the influence of real religion is adequately there. To preserve family life from decay, to give strength and beauty to the domestic relations, to bind the home together and make its circle a unit and a source of elevating influence, nothing helps so much as simple and sincere devotional usages and habits.

¶ A worldly home cannot be a deeply united and happy one. There must be a common life in God and union there. The best we can do for our children is to create in the home an atmosphere that is favourable to reverence and faith. For they

grow, like air-plants, chiefly by what they absorb from the atmosphere around them. If allowed to grow up in a non-worshipful atmosphere they will be injured for life. Herbert Spencer has enriched our educational vocabulary with the phrase "complete life," and the quiet and gradual awakening and culture of the religious affections are as necessary, yea, more necessary, to the complete life of our youths and maidens than any physical or mental training.[1]

¶ So far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love,—so far as it is this, and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light,—shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos in the stormy sea;—so far it vindicates the name, and fulfils the praise, of Home.[2]

(3) *In the Church.*—In that temple of God which we call the Church, upon the altars of our sanctuaries, the holy fire ought ever to be kept burning and never be suffered to go out. We shall not quarrel about words and phrases, and mistake form for substance and semblance for reality, but it is prayer and the prayer-spirit which make a Church out of a congregation. Gatherings together to hear argument and rhetoric, anecdote and music, may be good in their way, and serve some useful purpose, but they are not such gatherings together as make one feel and say, "the Lord is in His holy temple."

¶ It seems to me that what we most need in our land and day is an order of churches which unite great spirituality and deep devotional power with pure and high intelligence, and can be satisfied with naught but reality and truth; Churches of the Reconciliation, we might call them, for they would stand for the union of the devout and fervent spirit with the open and enlightened mind, and with the whole scope and temper of modern Christian thought.[1]

II.

How is the Fire Kindled?

1. Recall the circumstances in which the words of the text were spoken. The altar of which the writer of the Book of Leviticus speaks was the brazen altar that stood at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation. It was there that the sacri-

[1] John Hunter. [2] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, 137.

fices were offered unto God by Israel; and the sacrifices were all of them of necessity consumed by fire that was God-kindled. When the Tabernacle was completed and the worship of God begun in it, Moses and Aaron complied with every direction for the offering of sacrifice which God had given them. The wood was laid upon the altar; the body of the victim was laid upon the wood; a cake of meal-offering was laid upon the body of the victim; the incense and the salt were laid upon the cake; the blood was poured out about the altar; and the wine was mingled with the blood; and every direction that God had given them was fulfilled. But there the sacrifice lay upon the altar a dead thing; and then fire came down from the Lord, kindled the wood, consumed the sacrifice, and the offering came up into the presence of the Eternal through the fire which He had given. Precisely the same scene is repeated when the Tabernacle gave place to the Temple. Solomon again obeyed each of those ritual laws. And then he prayed; and it came to pass, "when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices." And when the people saw it they said: "The Lord is good; His mercy endureth for ever." It was an old law of Israel that no offering could come up for acceptance before God unless it were burned with fire that came down from God.

2. Now this altar is the altar of the Christian heart, and the sacrifice is the offering of the Christian to God in Christ to live the Christian life, and the power to live the Christian life is, in the grace of God, through the fire that God the Holy Ghost kindles in the heart.

Spring may come, but on granite will grow no green thing;
It was barren in winter, 'tis barren in spring;
And granite man's heart is, till grace intervene,
And, crushing it, clothe the long barren with green.
When the fresh breath of Jesus shall touch the heart's core,
It will live, it will breathe, it will blossom once more.[1]

3. The fire is looked upon as being the type of what old theologians called "effective grace." What they meant by that was this. Fire typifies grace when it comes to act effectively upon

[1] Jalaluddin Rumi, in Field's *Book of Eastern Wisdom*, 57.

the one who is the subject of that gracious influence. There comes the wonderful influence of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of regeneration—what we call conversion—becomes effective as the one great shaping, living force that acts within the soul of the believer.

¶ Grace does not altogether change nature, but uses it as it finds it. For instance, when a man who is kind and gentle by nature is turned to the faith, like Nicolas Hausmann, grace makes him a tender and gentle preacher; whilst of a man naturally given to anger, like Conrad Cordatus, it makes an earnest, serious preacher; whilst if another has a subtile and powerful understanding, that is used for the benefit of the people.[1]

4. Divine grace is well typified by fire. There is nothing which gives such an idea of vital energy as fire. Of all forces, when you think of power, it is the most powerful. And this fire of Divine grace is kindled in the heart, and acts upon every portion of it. It is the Divine life. It comes like light to the intellect, and illuminates it; it comes like heat to the heart and inflames it; it comes like strength to the will and energizes it and gives it strength; it comes with all its soothing influence, also, to the conscience, and purifies it and gives it peace. And so this Divine fire is that in which we live the Christian life. We cannot live it without it. No determination of our natural will will enable us to live without it. And we cannot manufacture it; if we try to do so, if we try to live our lives by offering sacrifice to God, like Nadab and Abihu, with strange fire, it is a powerless, it is an unacceptable thing. Christian life can be lived only in the energy of that Divine fire, that life of God communicated to every portion of the inner spirit, permeating it, influencing it, transfiguring it like a flame.

¶ It is said to be the prerogative of genius to light its own fire. But we have not to originate the flame of spiritual desire in ourselves. Some spark from the heavenly altars has reached each one of us. We describe ourselves at times as seekers after God, but the truth is we seek God because He first seeks us. Our upward yearnings and strivings are the answering movement of our spirits to the touch of His spirit. It is an old tradition that the fire which burned for so many ages upon the altars of Israel without going out was first conveyed from heaven. The Divine

[1] **Luther**, *Watchwords for the Warfare of Life*, 254.

aspiration is itself a Divine gift. The need of God and the feeling after Him, which are the root and support of all religious observances, are not instructed into existence; they are not of human invention, but of human nature—that deeper nature which is begotten, not made, born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The appeal of religion and of the literature which interprets religion is to the intuitions of the race. We first feel within us what we discern to be without us. The recognition of God is the soul unfolding to spiritual realities and relations. We call Jesus, Lord—confess Him to be the Master of the Divine life through the awakening in ourselves of a kindred spirit:—

> Held our eyes no sunny sheen,
> How could sunshine e'er be seen?
> Dwelt no power Divine within us,
> How could God's Divineness win us?[1]

¶ How much more beautiful and suggestive is the thought of that ever-burning fire on the altar of burnt-offering than the so-called miracle of the "Holy Fire," which is enacted annually in our time at Jerusalem! On the eve of the Greek Easter Day all the lamps in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are solemnly extinguished. Afterwards, in the course of the night, a bright flame suddenly appears in the Chapel of the Sepulchre, and this, it is said, has been kindled by God Himself. Then the Greek Patriarch lights a candle at the "Holy Fire"; and this candle is passed, amidst intense excitement, over the heads of the crowd of pilgrims, each of whom lights his own taper at the sacred flame, that he may carry it with him to his distant Russian home.[2]

> Summe up at night what thou hast done by day,
> And in the morning what thou hast to do;
> Dresse and undresse thy soul; mark the decay
> And growth of it; if with thy watch that too
> Be down, then winde up both: since we shall be
> Most surely judg'd, make thy accounts agree.[3]

III.

How is the Fire Maintained?

The fire on the altar of Israel, though kindled from heaven, had to be kept constantly burning by natural and human means.

[1] John Hunter.
[2] C. Jerdan.
[3] George Herbert, *The Church Porch*, lxxvi.

The priests had to lay wood on the altar every morning, and, like the vestal virgins of Rome, to watch day and night with sleepless care lest the holy flame should die out. It is a parable of which the spiritual experience of mankind writes large the meaning. The religious sentiment, which is an essential element of human nature, needs cultivation as certainly as the power to think, or the love of the beautiful, or our affection for parents and friends.

1. *The Removal of the Ashes.*—What had the priest to do? First of all he had to go to the altar every day, take away the ashes and carry them to the place where the sin-offering was burnt without the camp. The ashes were that part of the wood that was laid upon the altar to feed the fire, which is of the earth earthy; that which could never mount up towards God, blending with the atmosphere, and become an offering in His presence.

The ashes are our sins; the things that day by day and hour by hour lie upon our consciences; the things that we know are wrong. And whatever we do we must not allow these sins to lie upon our hearts; we must get rid of them regularly, because, if we do not, just as the accumulating ashes would have smothered the fire upon the altar, so the accumulating sin within us will destroy the Divine life. So we have to go into the inner temple of our own being; we have to go to the altar and take away the ashes; find them out by regular self-examination.

¶ Our Christian life cannot go on aright unless, like the priests of old, at fixed and regular times we go to the altar of our heart, and there find out what the ashes are. Then when we have found them out, let us take them in our hands—take them in the hands of a trembling contrition, and be sure we carry them to the right place. We cannot go wrong as to what the right place is, because we have got an interpretation of it given us in the New Testament: "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp." Let us take them to Jesus always; kneel down at His feet; confess our sins to Him definitely. If we confess our sins—not sin—if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.[1]

[1] Canon G. Body.

Take unto Thyself, O Father,
This folded day of Thine,
This weary day of mine,
Its ragged corners cut me yet,
O, still the jar and fret!
Father, do not forget
That I am tired
With this day of Thine.

Breathe Thy pure breath, watching Father,
On this marred day of Thine,
This erring day of mine!
Wash it white of stain and spot!
O, cleanse its every blot!
Reproachful Eyes! remember not
That I have grieved Thee
On this day of Thine!

2. *The Feeding with Fuel.*—We have not only to take away the ashes, we have also to lay on wood. We must feed the fire. What is the fuel which God has provided for the fire of the Christian life? We know the answer—the public and private means of grace. A diligent use of the public ordinances of God's house is necessary to the obtaining of fuel for the spiritual life. Under the Mosaic law the Sabbath was instituted not only as a day of rest from the ordinary work and activities of life, but also as a day of "holy convocation"—a day which furnished an opportunity of assembling for Divine worship. And the Christian Sabbath is in force for the same purpose. "Waiting upon the Lord" in the public worship of the sanctuary, we "renew our strength, we mount up with wings as eagles; we run and are not weary; we walk and are not faint."

¶ Then I saw in my Dream, that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a place where was a Fire burning against a Wall, and one standing by it always, casting much Water upon it to quench it: yet did the Fire burn higher and hotter. Then said Christian, What means this? The Interpreter answered, This fire is the work of Grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts Water upon it, to extinguish and put it out, is the Devil: but in that thou seest the fire notwithstanding burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that: So he

had him about to the back side of the Wall, where he saw a Man with a Vessel of Oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast (but secretly,) into the Fire. Then said Christian, What means this? The Interpreter answered, This is Christ, who continually with the oil of his Grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart; by the means of which, notwithstanding what the Devil can do, the souls of his People prove gracious still. And in that thou sawest that the Man stood behind the Wall to maintain the Fire; this is to teach thee, that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of Grace is maintained in the soul.[1]

More particularly, the fuel is—

(1) *Prayer.*—Prayer lies at the very foundation of all Christian vitality. To be a praying man or woman is to be spiritually living; to be not praying is to be spiritually dead. Prayer is the Christian's vital breath; and as, if I would live I must breathe, so, if I would be a Christian I must pray; or if I cease to pray, my spiritual life perishes. It lies beneath everything. Without prayer the study of God's Word is no good; without prayer worship in the sanctuary is no good; without prayer work as a teacher or district visitor is no good—not spiritually; without prayer self-communing is no good.

¶ "It has been the greatest error of my life," said a great man in his old age, "not learning to avail myself as I should have done of the help of prayer." And what moral loss and failure proceed from this neglect! It is an ethical as well as a religious mistake. Superficial are we in all our observation and experience of life if we fail to see the moral uplift of religious worship; how goodness and integrity are hallowed and protected by intense religious feeling—regarded and cherished as part of the service we owe to God; and how faith, instead of being a substitute for right living, is in truth its supreme aid and inspiration, moving one to greater effort and attainment, and preserving and nourishing in the soul those finer virtues and graces which are the flower and crown of human character.[2]

O only Source of all our light and life,
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone aright reveal!

[1] *Pilgrim's Progress*, Clar. Press ed., 32.

[2] John Hunter.

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;
Chastised each rebel self-encentered thought,
My will adoreth Thine.

With eye down-dropt, if then this earthly mind
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en depart;
Nor seek to see—for what of earthly kind
Can see Thee as Thou art?—

If sure-assured 'tis but profanely bold
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to see,
It dare not dare the dread communion hold
In ways unworthy Thee.

O not unowned, Thou shalt unnamed forgive,
In worldly walks the prayerless heart prepare;
And if in work its life it seem to live,
Shalt make that work be prayer.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work it plies,
Unsummoned powers the blinding film shall part,
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the eyes
In recognition start.

As wills Thy will, or give or e'en forbear
The beatific supersensual sight,
So, with Thy blessing blest, that humbler prayer
Approach Thee morn and night.[1]

¶ Many in these days who eulogize the devotion of Jesus to the service of mankind forget that from the beginning to the close of His earthly ministry He drew strength for that service from communion with God. "I live by the Father," He once said, and in these words we have the secret of His life and work, of His unwearying self-devotion to the cause of man and God.[2]

Forasmuch as they who love, and lean in love upon His breast,
Reap the richer bliss of being, drink the dews of a deeper rest,
Rise renewed in soul and sinew, greeting life with a keener zest,
I will seek Him.

[1] Clough. [2] John Hunter.

¶ It is told of Wilberforce that when an over-zealous friend asked him about the state of his soul, he replied: "I have been so busy thinking about poor slaves that I have forgotten that I had a soul." He, perhaps, could afford to take for a time that attitude, for he had stored up in himself the results of years of severe spiritual discipline and culture. But his words, or words like them, are often used by persons to justify philanthropic activities which leave little or no leisure in their crowded days for the quiet thought which their needy souls require, and their work also, in order to make it nobly fruitful. The work cannot be better than the workman, and what we accomplish depends ultimately upon what we are. To give we must have; to do we must be.

If we with earnest effort could succeed
To make our life one long connected prayer,
As lives of some perhaps have been and are:
If never leaving Thee, we had no need
Our wandering spirits back again to lead
Into Thy presence, but continued there,
Like angels standing on the highest stair
Of the sapphire throne,—this were to pray indeed.

But if distractions manifold prevail,
And if in this we must confess we fail,
Grant us to keep at least a prompt desire,
Continual readiness for prayer and praise,
An altar heaped and waiting to take fire
With the least spark, and leap into a blaze.[1]

(2) *Study of the Word.*—Lay on, secondly, the fuel of the Word. If you want to see what kind of wood that is, study Psalm cxix. It is the Word of God intelligently read and above all meditated upon: "While I was musing, the fire kindled, and at the last I spoke with my tongue." And for this reason, because the Word of God unveils to us Him who is the incarnate Word, foreshadowed in the law, foretold in the prophets, recorded in the Gospels, explained in the Epistles. And as we are brought into contact with our Lord there, as with the study of the Word we grow in the knowledge of Him, the altogether lovely One, the object of supreme desire, and while our whole nature feels the touch of the fire that comes through the Word, our mind basks

[1] R. C. Trench.

in the light, our heart rejoices in beauty, our conscience is gladdened with peace, and our own will within us consciously thrills beneath the touch of that most blessed Word.

¶ The truth revealed in the Scriptures, indeed, is the instrumentality which the Holy Spirit employs for communication of the life of God to the soul. "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." And by the same instrumentality is this life sustained. The prayer of our Lord for His disciples was, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Hence, the apostolic exhortation, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

¶ But it is most important to observe the order here. The order is first prayer, and then the reading of the Word. A gentleman was asked by an artist friend of some note to come to his home, and see a painting just finished. He went at the time appointed, was shown by the attendant into a room which was quite dark, and left there. He was much surprised, but quietly waited developments. After perhaps fifteen minutes his friend came into the room with a cordial greeting, and took him up to the studio to see the painting, which was greatly admired. Before he left, the artist said laughingly, "I suppose you thought it queer to be left in that dark room so long." "Yes," the visitor said, "I did." "Well," his friend replied, "I knew that if you came into my studio with the glare of the street in your eyes you could not appreciate the fine colouring of the picture. So I left you in the dark room till the glare had worn out of your eyes."[1]

(3) *The Use of the Holy Eucharist.*—There is nothing which feeds the Divine fire within us like receiving with penitent heart and lively faith that gift which seems to be the very anticipation of heaven itself, that gift of our Lord as the bread of life in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

At the Lord's Table waiting, robed and stoled,
Till all had knelt around, I saw a sign!
In the full chalice sudden splendours shine,
Azure and crimson, emerald and gold.

I stoop'd to see the wonder, when, behold!
Within the cup a Countenance Divine
Look'd upwards at me through the trembling wine,
Suffused with tenderest love and grief untold.

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 161.

The comfort of that sacramental token
From Memory's page Time never can erase;
The glass of that rich window may be broken,
But not the mirror'd image of His grace,
Through which my dying Lord to me has spoken,
At His own Holy Table, face to face![1]

3. These means must not only be used but they must be used *habitually*, that the fire may not go out. To produce any activity that is meant to be a continuous element in life there must be unremitting attention to the conditions of its development and use. The masters of music are always in training; they not only give years of laborious study to the discipline and education of their musical power and taste, but after all their preparatory studies they do not neglect the daily practice. But with regard to the devout spirit and life we are slow, almost reluctant, to learn that we must make much of method and habit, and that without persistent fidelity there can be no attainment. We know and are persuaded that to attain any other kind of excellence, to excel as students of physical science, as painters, singers, pianists, violinists, we must give time and thought to it, resolute purpose and steady practice; but somehow we imagine that excellence in a life infinitely higher than the scientific or artistic life does not require any such earnest and ceaseless endeavour; that the finest powers and affections of our human being—the capacity of religious inspiration, the power to draw near unto God and to enter into the communion of His Spirit—that these powers, compared with which genius in music or painting or science is but a small thing, may be preserved and nourished into strength and beauty without the systematic care and culture which other and lower faculties and tastes and any mechanical or professional success require and demand.

¶ I shut myself up and practised twelve hours and more a day, until one day my left hand was swollen to about twice its usual size, causing me considerable anxiety. For some months I hardly ever left my rooms, and only when I received invitations to houses where I knew I should meet, and perhaps hear, Chopin.[2]

¶ We often hear men speak about the *spirit* of prayer as being enough. Yes! it is enough; but how are we to have and to keep the spirit of prayer save as we have and keep the spirit of

[1] Frederick Tennyson. [2] *Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé*, 32.

knowledge, the spirit of art, the spirit of love, or the spirit of anything else, save by fulfilling the conditions of having and keeping it? In pleading for devotional observances and habits, I am pleading the cause of the spirit. The men who may be said to pray without ceasing, who live almost unconsciously in an atmosphere spiritual and vital, and to whom God is the Great Companion of their days, are not the men who slight the habits of prayer; and they—the men who have mastered the art of living with God—are the only persons who can speak with any real authority on this subject. One of them says: "Evening, morning, and at noon will I cry unto thee." Jesus Christ was full of the spirit of prayer, His heart was a shrine of unceasing worship, and His life was a constant walk with God; yet even He felt the need of method and habit, and obeyed the law which moves the devout soul to seek occasions of formal and concrete expression of its spiritual passion. He who lived in unbroken communion of spirit with His Father would yet spend whole nights in prayer, and make it His custom to go into the synagogue every Sabbath day.[1]

¶ Without uncharitableness, it may be said that much of our scepticism and unbelief is simply the scepticism of neglected souls and the unbelief of world-worn hearts. It is often remarked that, in our distracted and overcrowded life, it requires much effort to keep our friendships with one another. But think you it requires less effort to keep up our sense of intimacy with God, to know Him with that knowledge which is Eternal Life, to gain insight into His ways, to love Him, and to enjoy what the Benediction calls "the communion of the Holy Spirit"? Many of us, alas! do not take time to believe in God. By our unresting action in earthly affairs, by our neglect of meditation and prayer, we build up around ourselves the very conditions of unbelief, and thus the sense of God fades out of our hearts, and all vital recognition of God disappears from our lives. We cease to tend and feed the altar-fires, and in some hour of critical trial we wake up to the fact that the very capacity for receiving religious inspiration and religious comfort has almost perished, and we are ready to take up the moan of the dying Paracelsus in Robert Browning's poem—

> Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity;
> These are its sign and note and character,
> And these I have lost! gone, shut from me for ever.

[1] John Hunter.

The Scapegoat.

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THE SCAPEGOAT.

The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land.—Lev. xvi. 22.

I.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

THIS is part of the ritual of the Day of Atonement. Now the Day of Atonement represents the culminating institution of the Levitical system. Not only, from a merely formal point of view, does Lev. xvi. form the climax of the sacrificial and purificatory ordinances contained in Lev. i.–xv., but the ceremonial itself is of a peculiarly comprehensive and representative character. It was a yearly atonement for the nation as a whole (including the priests); and not only for the nation, but also for the sanctuary, in its various parts, in so far as this had been defiled during the past year by the sins of the people in whose midst it stood.

¶ In Rabbinical literature the Day of Atonement becomes practically the great Day of Repentance, the culmination of the Ten Days of Repentance. It brings with itself purification, the Father in Heaven making white the sin committed by the son, by His forgiveness and pardon. "It is the Day of the Lord, great and very terrible," inasmuch as it becomes a day of judgment, but also the Day of Salvation. "Israel is steeped in sin through the *Evil Yezer* in their body, but they do repentance and the Lord forgives their sins every year, and renews their heart to fear Him." "On the Day of Atonement I will create you a new creation." It is thus a penitential day in the full and in the best sense of the word.[1]

¶ The Talmudical treatise on the ritual of the Day of Atonement is entitled *Yoma*, "*the* day," which sufficiently expresses its importance in the series of sacrificial observances. It was the confession of the incompleteness of them all, a ceremonial proclamation that ceremonies do not avail to take away

[1] S. Schechter.

sin; and it was also a declaration that the true end of worship is not reached till the worshipper has free access to the holy place of the Most High. Thus the prophetic element is the very life-breath of this supreme institution of the old covenant, which therein acknowledges its own defects, and feeds the hopes of a future better thing.[1]

II.

The Two Goats.

1. On this day the Congregation of Israel brought two goats for the purpose of atonement. For these, lots were cast at the door of the sanctuary, "one lot for Jehovah, and the other lot for Azazel." The one on which the lot of Jehovah fell was then slain as a sin-offering. The other was brought before God "to make atonement over it, to send it away for Azazel into the wilderness." Then, after the sins of the congregation had been confessed, this animal was made the bearer of all the sins of the now reconciled Israel, and was led away into the wilderness and there let loose "in a solitary land."

¶ Most solemn as the services had hitherto been, the worshippers would chiefly think with awe of the high-priest going into the immediate presence of God, coming out thence alive, and securing for them by the blood the continuance of the Old Testament privileges of sacrifices and of access unto God through them. What now took place concerned them, if possible, even more nearly. Their own personal guilt and sins were now to be removed from them, and that in a symbolical rite, at one and the same time the most mysterious and the most significant of all. All this while the "scapegoat," with the "scarlet-tongue," telling of the guilt it was to bear, had stood looking eastwards, confronting the people, and waiting for the terrible load which it was to carry away "unto a land not inhabited." Laying both his hands on the head of this goat, the high-priest now confessed and pleaded: "Ah, Jehovah! they have committed iniquity; they have transgressed; they have sinned—Thy people, the house of Israel. Oh, then, Jehovah! cover over (atone for), I intreat Thee, upon their iniquities, their transgressions, and their sins, which they have wickedly committed, transgressed, and sinned before Thee—Thy people, the house of Israel. As it is written in the law of Moses, Thy servant, saying: "For on that day shall it

[1] A. Maclaren.

be covered over (atoned) for you, to make you clean; from all your sins before Jehovah, ye shall be cleansed." And while the prostrate multitude worshipped at the name of Jehovah, the high-priest turned his face towards them as he uttered the last words, "Ye shall be cleansed!" as if to declare to them the absolution and remission of their sins. Then a strange scene would be witnessed. The priests led the sin-burdened goat out through "Solomon's Porch," and, as tradition has it, through the eastern gate, which opened upon the Mount of Olives. Here an arched bridge spanned the intervening valley, and over it they brought the goat to the Mount of Olives, where one, specially appointed for the purpose, took him in charge. Tradition enjoins that he should be a stranger, a non-Israelite, as if to make still more striking the type of Him who was delivered over by Israel unto the Gentiles. Scripture tells us no more of the destiny of the goat that bore upon him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, than that they "shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness," and that "he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." But tradition supplements this information. The distance between Jerusalem and the beginning of "the wilderness" is computed at ninety *stadia*, making precisely ten intervals, each half a Sabbath-day's journey from the other. At the end of each of these intervals there was a station, occupied by one or more persons, detailed for the purpose, who offered refreshment to the man leading the goat, and then accompanied him to the next station. By this arrangement two results were secured: some trusted persons accompanied the goat all along his journey, and yet none of them walked more than a Sabbath-day's journey—that is, half a journey going and the other half returning. At last they reached the edge of the wilderness. Here they halted, viewing afar off, while the man led forth the goat, tore off half the "scarlet-tongue," and stuck it on a projecting cliff; then, leading the animal backwards, he pushed it over the projecting ledge of rock. There was a moment's pause, and the man, now defiled by contact with the sin-bearer, retraced his steps to the last of the ten stations, where he spent the rest of the day and the night. But the arrival of the goat in the wilderness was immediately telegraphed, by the waving of flags, from station to station, till, a few minutes after its occurrence, it was known in the Temple, and whispered from ear to ear, that "the goat had borne upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited."[1]

2. What, then, was the meaning of a rite on which such momentous issues depended? Everything about it seems strange

[1] Edersheim, *The Temple*, 317.

and mysterious—the lot that designated it, and that "to Azazel"; the fact that, though the highest of all sin-offerings, it was neither sacrificed nor its blood sprinkled in the Temple; and the circumstance that it really was only *part* of a sacrifice—the two goats together forming one sacrifice, one of them being killed, and the other "let go," there being no other analogous case of the kind except at the purification of a leper, when one bird was killed, and the other dipped in its blood, and let go free. For the common worshipper, then, the broad impression of this Day of Atonement was that the sins of the people were not only atoned for by the death of a victim, but separated from them and banished to forgetfulness through the same offering in another phase. While in the typical sacrifice this could be effected only by means of two victims, in the eternal reality to which it pointed the one Saviour who died and rose again becomes at once the atoning Sacrifice and the risen Sanctifier by whom our sin is removed.

¶ These two goats were not for Aaron, but for the people. We must regard them as if they were but one offering, for it needed both of them to set forth the divine plan by which sin is put away; one was to die, and the other was typically to bear away the sins of the people. One goat was to show how sin is put away in reference to God by sacrifice, and the other goat was to show how it is put away in reference to us, God's people, by being carried into oblivion.[1]

¶ Man hath not done anything on the day of sacrifice more pleasing to God than spilling blood; for verily the animal sacrificed will come on the day of resurrection with its horns, its hair, its hoofs, and will make the scale of his good actions heavy: and verily its blood reacheth the acceptance of God, before it falleth upon the ground: therefore be joyful in it.[2]

III.

For Azazel.

1. Of the two goats it is stated (xvi. 8) that the one was "for Jehovah," the other "for Azazel" (R.V.; the A.V. uses here the word "scapegoat"). "Azazel" is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament, and its meaning is much disputed. In the apocryphal Book of Enoch, Azazel is a spirit, the leader of the

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] Saying of Muhammad.

evil angels who formed unholy alliances with the "daughters of men" (Gen. vi. 2, 4). But whatever the precise attributes with which Azazel was invested at the time when the ritual of Lev. xvi. was framed, there can be little doubt that the ceremonial was intended as a symbolical declaration that the land and people are now purged from guilt, their sins being handed over to the evil spirit to whom they are held to belong, and whose home is in the desolate wilderness, remote from human habitations (verse 22, "into a land cut off"). No doubt the rite is a survival from an older stage of popular belief, engrafted on, and accommodated to, the sacrificial system of the Hebrews. For the expulsion of evils, whether maladies or sins, from a community, by their being laid symbolically upon a material medium, there are many analogies in other countries. The belief in goblins, or demons (*jinn*), haunting the wilderness and vexing the traveller, is particularly common in Arabia: in the Old Testament it is found in Lev. xvii. 7; Isa. xiii. 21, xxxiv. 14 ("satyrs," lit. *he-goats*, and Lilith, the night-monster). Azazel must have been such a spirit, sufficiently distinguished from the rest, in popular imagination, to receive a special name, and no doubt invested with attributes which, though unknown to us, were perfectly familiar to those for whom the ceremonial of Lev. xvi. was first designed.

¶ The rendering of the A.V., "scapegoat," inherited from the "Great Bible" of 1539, may be traced back through Seb. Münster ("caper abiturus"), Coverdale ("the free goat"), Luther ("der ledige Bock"), and Jerome ("caper emissarius") to the Greek translation of Symmachus; but it implies a derivation opposed to the genius of the Hebrew language, besides being inconsistent with the marked antithesis between "for Azazel" and "for Jehovah," which does not leave it open to doubt that the former is conceived as a personal being, *to* whom (cf. verse 26) the goat is sent. All the principal modern authorities agree in explaining Azazel as a personal name. "Scapegoat" is, however, a felicitous expression; it has become classical in English; and there is no reason why it should not be retained as a term descriptive of the goat sent into the wilderness, provided it be clearly understood that it is in no way a rendering of the Hebrew.[1]

2. The Jewish rite presents marks of strong kinship with similar rites which are still observed in every part of the world.

[1] S. R. Driver.

It was originally a rite of exorcism, and was modified into an object-parable of those great ethical lessons which God wished to impress upon the conscience of the chosen people, and in due time upon the human race. On the four great continents, and in many islands of the sea, it is carried out, with the variations due to local conditions, at fixed seasons of the year, or in times of epidemic. In some form or other it must have been in vogue before the dispersion of the primitive races, or at least have been suggested by ideas common to mankind in the cradle-lands of the prehistoric dawn. It was practised amongst unlettered and classical races alike, and in some parts of Europe variant types of the ceremony have survived the spread of the Christian faith.

¶ In some of the islands of South-Eastern Asia the ceremony is found in one of its most elementary forms. The custom has, of course, adapted itself to conditions where domestic animals are unknown and the inland areas present no deserts into which a scape-victim bearing the ills of the people could be dismissed. A ship is prepared on board which rice, eggs, and tobacco are placed, whilst a priest cries out: "All ye sicknesses, measles, agues, depart!" The ship is carried down to the shore, launched when a breeze begins to blow from off the land, and left to drift out to sea. The priest then cries out, "All the sicknesses are gone!" and the people who had shut themselves up in their homes through fear come forth again with a sense of relief. In the inland parts of the island the priests brush the people with branches of trees which are supposed to gather up all the evil influences that cleave to their bodies, and then throw the infected branches into the river to be carried out to sea.[1]

¶ A tribe of American Indians make white dogs their scape-victims, and drive them off into the prairie, whilst another tribe paint a man black to represent a demon and at last chase him from the village. A similar custom prevails amongst the aborigines of the Chinese Highlands. In times of epidemic a man is chosen for the victim, his face is smeared with paint, and with curses and tomtoms he is then driven forth from the hamlet and forbidden to return.[1]

3. The Jewish religion took hold upon a truth in this crude observance common to all races, and taught the multitude to look for release from sin by one who should be made sin for them. In the prefigurative ceremony the burden of the assembly's sin was

[1] T. G. Selby.

transferred to a pair of victims, one of which was slain at the altar where its life was offered to an offended God, whilst the other was driven forth into the wilderness, carrying into inaccessible places the burden placed upon it. The principle needed fine definitions and careful safeguards in the after-ages, but it expressed a rough and enduring truth without which social and religious life are alike impossible. The vicarious principle is not ordained to compromise or destroy responsibility, but the denial of its presence and working, within divinely appointed limits, involves the denial of that providential order under which mankind is placed.

¶ But how is the modern world to be taught the vicarious principle when it has so little knowledge of the meaning of sin? No doubt ignorance of the nature of sin is largely due to ignorance of the Bible. Holman Hunt tells us his experience of this double ignorance when he returned from Palestine with his great picture, "The Scapegoat."

Mr. Gambart, the picture-dealer, was ever shrewd and entertaining. He came in his turn to my studio, and I led him to "The Scapegoat."

"What do you call that?"

"'The Scapegoat.'"

"Yes; but what is it doing?"

"You will understand by the title, *Le bouc errant.*"

"But why *errant*?" he asked.

"Well, there is a book called the Bible, which gives an account of the animal. You will remember."

"No," he replied; "I never heard of it."

"Ah, I forgot, the book is not known in France, but English people read it more or less," I said, "and they would all understand the story of the beast being driven into the wilderness."

"You are mistaken. No one would know anything about it, and if I bought the picture it would be left on my hands. Now, we will see," replied the dealer. "My wife is an English lady; there is a friend of hers, an English girl, in the carriage with her. We will ask them up; you shall tell them the title; we will see. Do not say more."

The ladies were conducted into the room.

"Oh, how pretty! what is it?" they asked.

"It is 'The Scapegoat,'" I said.

There was a pause. "Oh yes," they commented to one another, "it is a peculiar goat; you can see by the ears, they droop so."

The dealer then, nodding with a smile towards me, said to them, "It is in the wilderness."

The ladies: "Is that the wilderness now? Are you intending to introduce any others of the flock?" And so the dealer was proved to be right, and I had over-counted on the picture's intelligibility.[1]

4. This rite also provided a form of absolution which comforted the conscience-stricken Israelite, and gave fresh courage to his soul. It addressed itself to the imagination, and accomplished this specific end in a more vivid and impressive way than the common sacrifices of the tabernacle. This action-parable, in which perhaps there was much of condescension to the superstition of the age, helped men to feel that the load of guilt was gone, that clouds of gathering wrath had been dispersed, and that the sky from which God looked down was fair and smiling once more. In many places where similar rites were observed, the people crouched with fear in their houses, and some trace of this feature of the custom appears in the Book of Leviticus, which forbade the people entering into the tabernacle whilst the goat for sacrifice was being offered. When the rite had been accomplished, men and women breathed freely once more, as though the world were no longer a place of penalty and a prison-house. The sense of fear was dispelled from the heart as the dim figure of the man leading the scapegoat disappeared over the tops of the hills, and no news of the year was received with greater gladness than the word signalled back to the city that the victim with its burden had passed into the waste wilderness. The rite was obviously adopted to keep alive the expectation of a time when evil should be cast forth into the desolate spaces of the Universe, and the last trace of sin and its curse should be taken away from the city and the people of God. The ceremony was surely a prophecy in symbol of the true Day of Atonement, when the Man of God's choice should carry the burdens of the race into the land of forgetfulness and gracious oblivion.

¶ No sins are reckoned against us by God; on His side they are all put away—in relation to Him they have no existence. Hence our Lord says (Matt. ix. 2): "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins *have been done away.*" "Son"—for He is speaking to him as to a child of God, and tells him, without any solicitation on his

[1] W. Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, ii. 107.

part, an eternal fact, viz.—that his sins have no existence as in the mind or eye of God. The same truth is expressed in the parable of the prodigal son—there is no reckoning of sin against the prodigal on the father's side.[1]

Rest, weary heart!
The penalty is borne, the ransom paid,
For all thy sins full satisfaction made!
Strive not to do thyself what Christ has done,
Claim the free gift, and make the joy thine own;
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distrest,
Rest! calmly rest!

IV.

Sacrifice and Separation.

Once a year the sins of the people were thus solemnly atoned for, and the nation's lost holiness was restored (verse 30, "to cleanse you: from all your sins shall ye be clean before Jehovah"). The slain goat made atonement for the people's sins, and restored their peace and fellowship with God; the goat over which the people's sins were confessed, and which was afterwards sent away to Azazel in the wilderness, symbolized visibly their complete removal from the nation's midst (Ps. ciii. 12; Mic. vii. 19): a life was given up for the altar, and yet a living being survived to carry away all sin and uncleanness: the entire ceremonial thus symbolized as completely as possible both the atonement for sin and the entire removal of the cause of God's alienation.

1. *Sacrifice.*—No specific mention is made of this rite in the subsequent books of the Bible, but it probably coloured the language of the prophet as he portrayed the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, who was despised and rejected, and from whom men hid their faces. The iniquity of the erring flock laid by a Divine hand upon His sacred person suggests the picture of the high priest transferring the common sin to the scape-victim by words of confession and the laying on of his hands. When the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts that it is not possible for "the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin," he perhaps has

[1] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 71.

in view at the moment the offerings of the great Day of Atonement. This rite of course is included without express mention in the statement that the meaning of all sacrifice is consummated and fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ. Our Lord gathers up into His ministry and death the peculiar lines of thought indicated in this ceremony. In setting Himself to deal with the problem of suffering by first of all attacking the problem of sin, Jesus was bringing home to the multitude the fundamental lesson of this ancient ritual.

2. *Separation.*—We can almost see the figure of the scape-victim, looming through the shadows of the night, as Matthew describes the great healer casting out devils when the sick were brought to His feet in the Sabbath twilight. The evangelist seems to see the sicknesses He healed transferred to His weary form, and weighting His sympathetic soul, and sums up the picture in the memorable words of the prophet, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." In Jesus Christ the rite comes back into some kind of external likeness to the primitive form, but with an unutterable difference, a difference consisting in an overwhelming contrast rather than a comparison. The scape-victim is the Man of Sorrows, chosen not by lot, but by the decree of the Most High, proclaimed through signs and wonders which God did by Him in the midst of the people. He is selected, if we may use the contrast without irreverence, not like the victim of primitive societies, who was singled out for the office by a degradation which seemed openly to challenge the wrath of the gods, but because of His transcendent dignity and holiness. It is no slave or war-captive who is dragged to this pathetic and ignominious ministry, but the Lord of heaven and the Prince of the kings of the earth, drawn by His own free compassions for the guilty and burdened race, made a curse to redeem us from the curse which cleaves to all offenders against God.

¶ "Unto a solitary land." The solitude of the Sin-bearer is something altogether distinct from the solitude of the Holy One. In His human life, our blessed Lord was, in a certain sense, solitary for this simple reason that He moved on a higher platform than others. He did not find Himself able to educate His own most intimate followers into sympathy with His own real aspirations, or to bring them under the law of life, under which

He moved and acted. They remained of the earth, earthy, while He was above it, breathing a purer atmosphere, and living by a higher law. This solitude of holiness separated Him from sinners: but that very separation which, from time to time, made Him lead, in His humanity, a strange lonesome life, yet brought Him into such full contact with all the glorious beings and the realities of the spirit-world, that such a solitude could hardly be looked upon with any considerable regret, or be the source of any actual pain. But it was otherwise now. We are speaking, not of the solitude of the Representative of holiness and purity, but of the solitude of the Sin-bearer, because He was the sin-bearer.[1]

¶ It was a weary journey that the scapegoat took. It left the fertile fields, and the babbling brooks of Israel, far behind: the distant heights of Carmel disappeared on the far-off horizon; before it, there opened up a boundless waste of desert sand, while the "fit man" trudged on relentlessly, farther, and farther, many a weary mile, and still the scapegoat followed him, bearing the sins of the people. The grassy plains have disappeared; the last palm tree is lost in the distance; the sound of running waters has long since died upon the ear; and all around there is the barren waste of desert sand; and still the man trudges on, and still the scapegoat follows him. All alone in the desolate wilds, all alone in a blighted land, and not inhabited. And then the fit man disappears. He had led the goat into the solitude, and lo, it is left alone—all alone. Wistfully it gazes round on the dreary scene. Oh, for one blade of grass! oh, for one drop of water! Its eyes are strained, its nostrils dilated, if by chance it may catch a breath of something like fertility borne in the gale from the distance: but no. In solitude and weariness it still goes wandering on, and every step it takes, brings it farther, and farther still, into the silent desolate desert: the scapegoat is all alone. The weary day drags out its long hours: the dark and mournful night closes in; the morning sun rises up with blistering heat; its lips are parched, its limbs are trembling: it sinks amidst the desert sand, and dies. For it must be remembered that it was a late custom that threw it over the rock; at the first it was simply left to die.

And so the scapegoat bore the sins of the people into the land of separation. Leave it there, and come to Calvary.

We seem to see the Scapegoat of the human family led by the hand of the "fit man." We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the Lord Jesus Christ, "*by the eternal Spirit*" offered Himself to God. That same Spirit of God that led Him

[1] W. H. M. H. Aitken.

alone into the wilderness, not that He might find comfort, but that He might meet with temptation, has led Him right up to Jerusalem. He set His face like a flint to go; but still the Spirit led, and still He pursued His leading, until He finds Himself in Gethsemane. The terrible darkness is beginning to gather round Him, and the agony to oppress His soul; but the Spirit of God leads on, and the Scapegoat continues to follow. He finds Himself all alone in the judgment hall, separated from those who were dearest to Him, and not one friendly voice raised up on behalf of the dying Son of God: but the Spirit still leads on, and the Scapegoat must still follow. He finds Himself nailed to the cross, and His lips are parched with thirst, and His body quails in agony. Will He not now pause and call for the ten legions of angels? Might He not raise those languid, dying eyes, and demand a draught of the sparkling waters of life from His Father's hand? But the Spirit still leads on; and the Scapegoat must follow. Deeper and deeper, into the darkness; down into the solitude of sorrow, down into the desolate land not inhabited; and, by and by, from the breaking heart, there rings throughout God's universe the cry of "the Forsaken," "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" The Scapegoat has found the land of separation at last, all alone in the darkness. The isolating influences of sin have done their work. He is shut out from the light of His Father's eye, or to Himself He seems to be: the joy, the delight of His life is gone: the blessed fellowship seems broken: there is a horrible sense of loneliness within His heart, and a terrible desolation within His guiltless soul. So He sinks, He staggers, He dies: Jesus, "the Forsaken."

And so He bore our sins into the land not inhabited. No witnessing spirit can find them there; no denizen of those dreary regions can rediscover them. They are left amid the wastes of desolation; they are sunk like a stone into the depths of the vast ocean of infinite love. They are lost sight of by man; the very devils of hell cannot rediscover them; the angels find them obliterated from their view, and God Himself has turned His back upon them, and left them in the land of separation.[1]

"Now have I won a marvel and a Truth;"
So spake the soul and trembled, "dread and ruth
Together mixed, a sweet and bitter core
Closed in one rind; for I did sin of yore,
But this (so said I oft) was long ago;
So put it from me far away, but, lo!
With Thee is neither After nor Before,

[1] W. H. M. H. Aitken.

O Lord, and clear within the noon-light set
Of one illimitable Present, yet
Thou lookest on my fault as it were now.
So will I mourn and humble me; yet Thou
Art not as man that oft forgives a wrong
Because he half forgets it, Time being strong
To wear the crimson of guilt's stain away;
For Thou, forgiving, dost so in the Day
That shows it clearest, in the boundless Sea
Of Mercy and Atonement, utterly
Casting our pardoned trespasses behind,
No more remembered, or to come in mind;
Set wide from us as East from West away:
So now this bitter turns to solace kind;
And I will comfort me that once of old
A deadly sorrow struck me, and its cold
Runs through me still; but this was long ago.
My grief is dull through age, and friends outworn,
And wearied comforters have long forborne
To sit and weep beside me: Lord, yet Thou
Dost look upon my pang as it were now!"[1]

[1] Dora Greenwell.

Come with Us.

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Come with Us.

And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes.—Num. x. 29–31.

The Israelites reached Sinai in three months after leaving Egypt. They remained there for at least nine months, and amidst the solitude of those wild rocks they kept the first Passover—the anniversary of their deliverance. "On the twentieth day of the second month" they began again their march through the grim, unknown desert. One can fancy their thoughts and fears as they looked forward to the enemies and trials which might be awaiting them. In these circumstances this story comes in most naturally. Some time before the encampment broke up from Sinai, a relative of Moses by marriage, Hobab by name, had come into the camp on a visit. He was a Midianite by race; one of the wandering tribes from the south-east of the Arabian peninsula. He knew every foot of the ground, as such men do. He knew where the springs were and the herbage, the camping-places, the short-cuts, and the safest routes. So Moses, who had no doubt forgotten much of the little desert skill he had learned in keeping Jethro's flock, prayed Hobab to remain with them and give them the benefit of his practical knowledge—"to be to us instead of eyes."

The passage has been treated in two very different ways. Some expositors consider that Moses was to blame for seeking a human guide when God had given the pillar of cloud to conduct the Israelites through the wilderness. Maclaren takes this view. The historian, he says, after recording the appeal to Hobab, passes on to describe at once how "the ark of the covenant of the Lord

went before them to search out a resting-place for them," and how "the cloud was upon them when they went out of the camp." The historian puts the two things side by side, not calling on us to notice the juxtaposition, but surely expecting that we shall not miss what is so plain. He would teach us that it mattered little whether Israel had Hobab or not, if they had the ark and the cloud.[1]

Others concentrate their attention on the invitation. They see that, rightly or wrongly, Hobab was invited to accompany Israel to Canaan, and that two arguments were used to induce him to do so: he would find good for himself, and he would be a benefit to them.

We may use both forms of exposition, though it will be well to use them separately. Then we have—

I. The Pilgrim and his Guides.
   1. Life is a journey through the Unknown.
   2. Who is to be the Guide?

II. The Pilgrim and his Friends.
   1. The Invitation.
   2. The Arguments.
      (1) For the Good you will get.
      (2) For the Good you can do.

I.

The Pilgrim and his Guides.

i. Life is a journey through the Unknown.

The itinerant life of God's ancient people in the wilderness foreshadows and teaches much concerning the life of His true Israel in all ages. It teaches us that the historic Israel, the people who journeyed from Egypt through the wilderness to Canaan, and the spiritual Israel, those who journey from this world to the heavenly country, are alike called out and separated by God from the world-life that is around them. Neither of them has yet reached or entered the promised rest, but they are journeying toward it. Both are beset by dangers along the way, because of malicious adversaries surrounding it, and because of the

[1] A. Maclaren, *The Secret of Power*, 252.

deceitfulness of their own hearts within. To both, the Lord, under whose orders they march, extends the protection of His power and the guidance of His light. He also furnishes both with bread from heaven to satisfy their hunger, and gives them waters of life from wells of salvation to quench their thirst. Besides, He ever holds before them the blessed hope of an abundant entrance into the rest He has promised, when each shall have reached the end of the journey.

¶ Among my own very earliest recollections, said Dr. Rainy, are those of an aged lady, very dear to me, whose life was one continued strain of overflowing piety, a long pilgrimage of faith, rising into an unbroken Beulah of praise and prayer.[1]

¶ It is a libel on God's goodness to speak of the world as a wilderness. He has not made it so; and if anybody finds that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit," it is his own fault. But still one aspect of life is truly represented by that figure. There are dangers and barren places, and a great solitude in spite of love and companionship, and many marchings, and lurking foes, and grim rocks, and fierce suns, and parched wells, and shapeless sand wastes enough in every life to make us quail often and look grave always when we think of what may be before us. Who knows what we shall see when we top the next hill, or round the shoulder of the cliff that bars our way? What shout of an enemy may crash in upon the sleeping camp; or what stifling gorge of barren granite—blazing in the sun and trackless to our feet—shall we have to march through to-day?[2]

¶ The world is very much what you and I choose to make it. God intends it to be a place of discipline for the heirs of glory; a place of preparation for heaven; a place in which we may be trained and fitted for the high destiny to which He has called us—just what the wilderness was to Israel. Now, if we use the world in this way, we shall find it to be a very good world for its purpose. And the discipline will not be all painful. We shall have, as Israel had, our *Marahs*, where the waters are bitter. Disappointments, bereavements, sicknesses, temptations, painful and prolonged conflicts with evil—these we shall have, and they will be hard to bear. But, like Israel, we shall have our *Elims* also, with their seventy palm trees, and twelve wells of refreshing waters. God will give to us joy, comforts, peace, rest, to cheer us on our way. Yet, just as no schoolboy counts school his home, but longs for the holidays, and the happy meeting with relatives and friends; so we, placed in the world as a school for

[1] P. C. Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, i. 25. [2] A. Maclaren.

a while, should not regard it as our home; but should look forward to the day, when, our training complete, we shall enter heaven, and dwell there with Jesus for ever.[1]

Elim, Elim! Through the sand and heat
I toil with heart uplifted, I toil with bleeding feet;
For Elim, Elim! at the last, I know
That I shall see the palm-trees, and hear the waters flow.

Elim, Elim! Grows not here a tree,
And all the springs are Marah, and bitter thirst to me;
But Elim, Elim! in thy shady glen
Are twelve sweet wells of water, and palms three-score and ten.

Elim, Elim! Though the way be long,
Unmurmuring I shall journey, and lift my heart in song;
And Elim, Elim! all my song shall tell
Of rest beneath the palm-tree, and joy beside the well.

ii. Who is to be the Guide?

1. *God.*—The true leader of the children of Israel in their wilderness journey was not Moses, but the Divine Presence in the cloud with a heart of fire, that hovered over their camp for a defence and sailed before them for a guide. "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way." When it lay on the tent, whether it was for "two days, or a month, or a year," the march was stayed, and the moment that the cloud lifted "by day or by night," the encampment was broken up and the long procession was got into marching order without an instant's pause, to follow its gliding motion wherever it led and however long it lasted. First to follow was the ark on the shoulders of the Levites, and behind it, separated by some space, came the "standard of the camp of the children of Judah, and then the other tribes in their order."

It would seem as if Hobab's aid were rendered needless by the provision of guidance immediately promised. Up to this moment the position of the Ark had been in the midst of the host, in front of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh; but henceforth it went three days' journey in front of the people, "to seek out a resting-place for them." We are left to conceive of its lonely journey as

[1] A. C. Price.

it went forward, borne by its attendant band of priests and Levites, and perhaps accompanied by a little group of princes and warriors, and especially by the great lawgiver himself. Far behind, at a distance of miles, followed the camp with its tumult, its murmur of many voices, the cries of little children, the measured tramp of armed bands. But none of these intruded on the silence and solemnity which, like majestic angels, passed forward with that courier group accompanying the Ark, over which cherubic forms were bending. That Moses was there is indubitable; for the august sentences are recorded with which he announced its starting forth and its setting down. In the one case, looking into the thin air, which seemed to him thronged with opposing forces of men and demons, he cried, "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee"; and in the other he cried, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel" (verses 35 and 36). Thus God Himself superseded the proposal of Moses by an expedient which more than met their needs.

¶ We have the same Divine guidance, if we will; in sober reality we have God's presence; and waiting hearts which have ceased from self-will may receive leading as real as ever the pillar gave to Israel. God's providence does still shape our paths; God's Spirit will direct us within, and God's word will counsel us. If we will wait and watch we shall not be left undirected. It is wonderful how much practical wisdom about the smallest perplexities of daily life comes to men who keep both their feet and their wishes still until Providence—or, as the world prefers to call it, "circumstances"—clears a path for them.

¶ Better to take Moses for our example when he prayed, as the ark set forward and the march began, "Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered," than to follow him in eagerly seeking some Hobab or other to show us where we should go. Better to commit our resting times to God with Moses' prayer when the ark halted, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel," and so to repose under the shadow of the Almighty, than to seek safety in having some man with us "who knows how we are to encamp in this wilderness."

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.[1]

2. *Man.*—Most commentators excuse, or even approve of, the effort of Moses to secure Hobab's help, and they draw from the story the lesson that supernatural guidance does not make human guidance unnecessary. That, of course, is true in a fashion; but it appears to us that the true lesson of the incident, considered in connection with the following section, is much rather that, for men who have God to guide them, it argues weakness of faith and

[1] W. C. Bryant, *To a Waterfowl.*

courage to be much solicitous of any Hobab to show them where to go and where to camp.[1]

¶ Our weakness of faith in the unseen is ever tending to pervert the relation between teacher and taught into practical forgetfulness that the promise of the new covenant is, "They shall all be taught of God." So we are all apt to pin our faith on some trusted guide, and many of us in these days will follow some teacher of negations with an implicit submission which we refuse to give to Jesus Christ. We put the teacher between ourselves and God, and give to the glowing colours of the painted window the admiration that is due to the light which shines through it.

¶ We seek our Hobabs in the advice of sage grey-haired counsellors; in the formation of strong, intelligent, and wealthy committees; in a careful observance of precedent. Anything seems better than a simple reliance on an unseen guide. Now, in one sense, there is no harm in this. We have neither right nor need to cut ourselves adrift from others who have had special experience in some new ground on which we are venturing. It is a mistake to live a hermit life, thinking out all our own problems, and meeting all our own questions as best we may. Those who do so are apt to become self-opinionated and full of crotchets. God often speaks to us through our fellows; they are His ministers to us for good, and we do well to listen to our Samuels, our Isaiahs, our Johns. But there is also a great danger that we should put man before God; that we should think more of the glasses than of that which they are intended to reveal; and that we should so cling to Hobab as to become unmindful of the true Guide and Leader of souls. When we have given Him His right place, He will probably restore our judges as at the first and our counsellors as at the beginning; but the first necessity is that the eye should be single towards Himself, so that the whole body may be full of light.[2]

3. *Christ.*—Moses sought to secure this Midianite guide because he was a native of the desert, and had travelled all over it. His experience was his qualification. We have a Brother who has Himself travelled every foot of the road by which we have to go, and His footsteps have marked out with blood a track for us to follow, and have trodden a footpath through the else pathless waste. He knows "how to encamp in this wilderness," for He Himself has "tabernacled among us," and by experience has

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] F. B. Meyer.

learned the weariness of the journey and the perils of the wilderness.

¶ Our poor weak hearts long for a brother's hand to hold us up, for a brother's voice to whisper a word of cheer, for a brother's example to animate as well as to instruct. An abstract law of right is but a cold guide, like the stars that shine keen in the polar winter. It is hard even to find in the bare thought of an unseen God guiding us by His unseen Spirit within and His unseen Providence without, the solidity and warmth which we need. Therefore we have mercifully received God manifest in the flesh, a Brother to be our guide and the Captain of our salvation.

II.

The Pilgrim and his Friends.

i. The Invitation.

It is one of those kindly gracious invitations which abound throughout the Word of God. It is the invitation of one relative to another. By faith, Moses saw before him the Promised Land; he *realized* it. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi. 1). And he longed intensely to have his friend and relative with him, in the inheritance of that land. Hence his earnest appeal. And as with Moses, so with all who are Christians indeed.

¶ When Paul had tasted the joy and peace of believing, he said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x. 1). When Andrew had found Christ himself, "he first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ; and he brought him to Jesus" (John i. 41, 42). So also Philip: he "findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And when "Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see" (John i. 45, 46). Further, when our Lord had cured the man possessed with a legion of devils, He bade him, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark v. 19). And, nearer to our own time than these instances, when the poor slave in Antigua had been converted to God, he used, day by day, to pray that there might be

a full heaven, and *an empty hell*. Yes, and a little girl of eleven years, who had found Jesus as her all, ran to her mother, her heart overflowing with love, and cried, "O mother, if all the world knew this! I wish I could tell everybody—may I not run in and tell some of our neighbours, that they may love my Saviour too?" Such is everywhere and always the spirit of true Christianity.[1]

1. The Invitation is a *promise*, a promise of good in the future. "For the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." The religion of the Bible is emphatically the religion of the promise. In heathen religion, the threat predominates over the promise. But in the glad faith that boasts the name of Gospel, the promise predominates over the threat. Christians are men with a hope, men who have been called to inherit a blessing. This element of promise runs through the whole Bible. What book anywhere can you point to with such a forward look as that book? As we watch the worthies of many generations pass in long procession onwards, from the day when the promise was first given of the One who should come and bruise the serpent's head, down to the day when the aged Simeon in the Temple took the Child Jesus into his arms and blessed Him, we seem to see upon every forehead a glow of light. These men, we say, front the sunrising. They have a hope. Their journey is into the morning. A purpose is in their eyes. They are looking for something, and they look as those look who expect in due time to find. If this be true of the general tone of the Old Testament Scriptures, doubly, trebly is it true of the New Testament. The coming of Christ has only quickened and made more intense in us that instinct of hope which the old prophecies of His coming first inspired. For when He came, He brought in larger hopes and opened to us far-reaching vistas of promise, such as had never been dreamed of before. Only think how full of eager, joyous anticipation the New Testament is, from first to last.

2. The promise is of a *Place*, "The place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." The progress of human knowledge has made it difficult to think and speak of heaven as believing men used to think and speak of it. But, while there is a certain grain of reasonableness in the argument for silence with respect to heaven and the things of heaven, there is by no means so much

[1] A. Maclaren.

weight to be attached to it as many people seem to suppose. For after all, when we come to think of it, this changed conception of what heaven may be like is not traceable so much to any marvellous revolution that has come over the whole character of human thought, as it is to the changes which have taken place in our own several minds, and which necessarily take place in every mind in its progress from infancy to maturity. The reality and trustworthiness of the promise are not one whit affected by the revelation of the vastness of the resources which lie at His command who makes the promise. Instead of repining because we cannot dwarf God's universe so as to make it fit perfectly the smallness of our notions, let us turn all our energies to seeking to enlarge the capacity of our faith, so that it shall be able to hold more.

¶ When the Church says "Come thou with us" to any who are hesitating and undecided, her face is heavenwards, her movement is in that way; she holds in her hand the roll of promise, the map of "the better country, even the heavenly," and sees her own title to possession written there as with the finger of God. She is not lured onwards by the dreams of natural enthusiasm, or by the flickering lights of philosophy, or by the dim hopes which arise in the human breast of something better and nobler to come, by God's goodness, out of all this wrack and storm of disappointment, sorrow, and change. These things are good in their own place and measure, but the Church has a word of promise from God, a promise clear and firm about another life, a perfect state, "a better country, an heavenly."[1]

¶ We had needs invent heaven if it had not been revealed to us; there are some things that fall so bitterly ill on this side time![2]

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon;
My scrip of joy, immortal diet;
My bottle of salvation.
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.
Blood must be my body's only balmer,
Whilst my soul like a quiet palmer,
Travelleth towards the land of heaven,
No other balm will there be given.

[1] A. Raleigh. [2] R. L. Stevenson, *St. Ives.*

Over the silver mountains,
Where spring the nectar fountains,
There will I kiss the bowl of bliss,
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon every milken hill.
My soul will be a-dry before,
But after, it will thirst no more.[1]

3. Much depends always upon the way in which the invitation is made.

(1) As it is a very kind and tender word, "Come thou with us," let it be spoken *persuasively.* Use such reasoning as you can to prove that it is at once a duty and a privilege. Observe, Moses does not command, but he persuades; nor does he merely make a suggestion or give a formal invitation, but he uses an argument, he puts it attractively, "And we will do thee good." So, look the matter up; study it; get your arguments ready, seek out inducements from your own experience. Draw a reason, and then and thus try to persuade your Christian friends.

(2) *Make it heartily.* Observe how Moses puts it as from a very warm heart. "*Come* thou with us"; give me thy hand, my brother; come thou with us, and we *will* do thee good. There are no "ifs" and "ands" and "buts," or, "Well, you may perhaps be welcome," but "Come thou with us." Give a hearty, loving, warm invitation to those whom you believe to be your brethren and sisters in Christ.

(3) *Make it repeatedly* if once will not suffice. Observe in this case, Hobab said he thought he would depart to his own land and his kindred, but Moses returns to the charge, and says "Leave us not, I pray thee." How earnestly he puts it! He will have no put off. If at first it was a request, now it is a beseeching almost to entreaty—"Leave us not, I pray thee." And how he repeats the old argument, but puts it in a better light!—"If thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

ii. The Arguments Used.

1. The first argument is, Come with us *for the good you will get.*

1. Moses has Hobab's interests at heart when he asks him to accompany them. This is so even if Hobab, like Moses himself,

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh.

should never enter the promised land; for he will be in the channel of the promise, under the blessing of God. For *his own sake* he ought to come, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

¶ As a lady, well known as an earnest and devoted servant of God, was going home from a meeting, she was asked to take the arm of a young gentleman who was moving in the highest circles of fashion, a man who had led a very gay life. He did not like taking this lady home; he suspected she would begin to preach to him before he got home; however, being a gentleman, he gave her his arm. She did not talk about the meeting, but as they were drawing near home she led the conversation round to subjects bearing on the well-being of her companion. He replied: "It seems to me that you religious people are always trying to strip us of all our little enjoyments. A young man has only once in his life an opportunity to enjoy himself; he will never have another chance. I am one of those who enjoy life thoroughly. I do not see why you should try to take away all I have got." The lady pressed him on the arm, and said to him very emphatically: "My dear sir, I don't want you to give up; I want you to receive." He said, "What do you mean?" She replied, "I won't say any more, I must leave that word for you to think over." "Well," he said, "I will try to turn it over in my mind, and see if I can understand you." And so it fell out that the word went home to his heart, and he never rested until he had got the reality.[1]

2. This argument is used by the *Church*. The Church says with assurance, Come with us and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. It says this with emphasis; it says it pleadingly. It has blessings, promises, and powers, of which it is sure. It knows that men are in need of what it possesses. It sees men living to little purpose and for little ends. It sees the sin and the sorrow. It has deep pity for the deep pathos of human life. Its whole work is to do men good, as it declares the gospel of the Kingdom, calling them to pardon and peace, offering them salvation, presenting to them the manifold riches of Christ, pointing to the way of life and of joy. The heart of the true Church yearns over men with a great longing, seeing them to be, though they may know it not, wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. It has a message for

[1] Canon W. Hay M. H. Aitken.

you, which it is irreparable loss for you to neglect. It offers you a great and eternal good.[1]

¶ It seems in these days that this is the only invitation to church now possible. All that is now possible is to *induce* people to go to church. They must be drawn, not driven. "Come with us," the congregation in God's house seems to say to outsiders: "Come with us, and we will do you good." It is well, it is a great thing, if the services of the church are felt to be pleasant: but it is vital and essential that they be felt to be helpful. They must *do you good*, or there is something wrong either in them or in you.[2]

3. In what ways may we hope to get good by coming to church?

(1) *By Recognition of the Unseen and Eternal.*—When we gather in church, here is something, coming regularly, coming frequently, that keeps us in remembrance that there is more than what is seen and felt; that there are realities and interests beyond what our senses reveal to us, which are the most substantial and enduring of all. It is a great matter—in this world of things we see and touch, and pressed as we are continually by the power which these things have to make us vaguely feel and practically live as if there were nothing beyond them—that this testimony is borne, at least every Sunday, to the existence and solemn importance of the Invisible and Spiritual.

Tell me the old, old story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love.

(2) *By Repetition of the Story of the Cross.*—We go to church to think of things; we go, intending that our minds be specially occupied with certain matters which, in the bustle of our life, we are ready to forget. There is a whole order of ideas present to our mind in God's house, which (to say the least) are not habitually associated with any other place we go to. There is an old story to be pressed upon us: an old story which is of such a nature, that though we know it quite well, we like and we need to hear it over again. For it may be told perpetually without anything like wearisome repetition: and all outward surroundings in this life go so much to make us unmindful of it, that we need

[1] Hugh Black. [2] A. K. H. Boyd.

sorely to have our minds specially and earnestly urged in just this particular direction.

Tell me the story often,
For I forget so soon;
The early dew of morning
Has passed away at noon.

(3) *By Realization of the Presence and Power of Christ.*—For there is more in God's house than instruction, or than stirring up the fading and feeble remembrance: more than that and deeper. God Almighty has appointed and decreed that there shall be a real power and grace and help in the ordinances of His house; and Christ has said, in sober earnest, that "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Tell me the story always,
If you would really be,
In any time of trouble
A comforter to me.

2. The second argument is, Come with us *for the good you can do.*

1. Moses had another plea, even after refusal—a plea, under the circumstances, far more powerful to such a man than the offer of personal good. It was the plea, not of Hobab's need of Israel, but of Israel's need of Hobab. He knew the country, knew all the dangers and resources: he was a man of great influence and wisdom; and cared for Moses, and presumably also for the great religious interests at stake in Israel's future. To have him with them would be a source of strength to all. And so Moses' invitation took another form. He appealed to Hobab's heart and not to his interests: he appealed to their need of him, and no longer to anything of good that might come to himself. "Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes."

¶ I believe you will seldom get much good unless you are willing also to confer good; those who are the nearest to the heart of the preacher, in all Christian service, will in all probability be most spiritually enriched under his ministry.[1]

2. This argument also is used by the Church. It is a powerful

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

argument to a high heart; and the Church's very existence—encamped in the wilderness, fighting the great battle against principalities and powers of evil, seeking, striving, suffering for that Promised Land, for man's higher life on earth, waiting for the consolation of Israel, giving itself to the great task of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth—the Church's very existence is an appeal to us. God had spoken good concerning Israel whether Hobab came or stayed; but it was much to have Hobab's help in the great enterprise, much to have one who could be to them instead of eyes. And the Kingdom of Heaven will come with us or without us; but just because it is a task high and hard, we should be in the thick of it, taking our part of the glorious burden. Though we might not think of coming for our own sake, can we resist this other appeal to come for the sake of the Church?

3. What good could Hobab have done?

(1) *He could have been a companion on the journey.*—We are meant to depend on one another. No man can safely isolate himself, either intellectually or in practical matters. The self-trained scholar is usually incomplete. Crotchets take possession of the solitary thinker, and peculiarities of character that would have been kept in check, and might have become aids in the symmetrical development of the whole man, if they had been reduced and modified in society, get swollen into deformities in solitude. The highest and the lowest blessings for life both of heart and mind—blessedness and love, and wisdom and goodness—are ministered to men through men, and to live without dependence on human help and guidance is to be either a savage or an angel. God's guidance does not make man's needless, for a very large part of God's guidance is ministered to us through men. And wherever a man's thoughts and words teach us to understand God's thoughts and words more clearly, to love them more earnestly, or to obey them more gladly, there human guidance is discharging its noblest function. And wherever the human guide turns us away from himself to God, and says, "I am but a voice, I am not the light that guides," there it is blessed and safe to cherish and to prize it.

¶ Some of us have sad memories of times when we journeyed in company with those who will never share our tent or counsel

our steps any more, and, as we sit lonely by our watchfire in the wilderness, have aching hearts and silent nights. Some of us may be, as yet, rich in companions and helpers, whose words are wisdom, whose wishes are love to us, and may tremble as we think that one day either they or we shall have to tramp on by ourselves. But for us all, cast down and lonely, or still blessed with dear ones and afraid to live without them, there is a Presence which departs never, which will move before us as we journey, and hover over us as a shield when we rest; which will be a cloud to veil the sun that it smite us not by day, and will redden into fire as the night falls, being ever brightest when we need it most, and burning clearest of all in the valley at the end, where its guidance will cease only because then "the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne will lead them." "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."[1]

They talk about the solid earth,
  But all has changed before mine eyes;
There's nothing left I used to know,
  Except God's everchanging skies.

I've kept old ways and loved old friends,
  Yet one by one they've slipped away;
Stand where we will, cling as we like,
  There's none but God can be our stay.

It is only by our hold on Him,
  We keep our hold on those who pass
Out of our sight across the seas,
  Or underneath the churchyard grass.[2]

(2) *He could have been of service to the good cause.*—Come, said Moses; if not for your own sake, come for our sake: if you do not need us, we need you: we are to encamp in the wilderness, girt round with danger and weighted with heavy tasks, and you can be to us instead of eyes. If you will not come because the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel, come to help us to achieve that good. "Leave us not, and thou mayest be to us as eyes."

¶ The Christian salvation is not just salvage, rescuing the flotsam and jetsam, the human wreckage that strews the sea of life; though it is the glory of the faith and its divinest attribute that it does save even the broken and battered lives of men. But salvation includes and implies *service* also. It is a summons to participate in a great work, to share in a glorious venture.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] W. R. Nicoll, *Sunday Evening*, 83.

¶ Think of the Church's task in its widest aspect—to claim the world for God, to let them that sit in darkness see the great light, anointed like the Church's Lord to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. Think of the terrible warfare to which it is committed—to subdue the beast in man, to oppose evil in high places and in low—a warfare that knows no truce, relentless, lifelong; and, as here in this corner of the field we are hard bestead and appeal to you for reinforcement, will you sit at ease and refuse the call?[1]

¶ Come with us, if not for the good you will get, then for the good you will do. You shall be to us for eyes, if it shall turn out that you can see more clearly and farther than we. You shall come in with your organic faculty unimpaired and use it to the utmost; with your natural tastes and tendencies that are sinless, undepreciated; with your points of natural superiority to be acknowledged and used. You shall be eyes to us to see what you only can see; and tongue, if you will, to tell the seeing for the good of all: and I think this, that if there be one spark of nobleness untarnished left in you, you cannot resist such an appeal. It is not to your selfishness; it is not for your own salvation; it is for the guidance and the good of God's struggling people; it is for the salvation of your fellowmen who may become God's struggling people through your means. There lives no man who has not something characteristic and peculiar to himself by the full development and expression of which he can benefit his fellow-creatures as no other but himself exactly can do. That idea can become fully real only in the Church of God.[2]

¶ Though you know nothing about the passion of the saints, what about the service of the saints? You are not sure about the supreme claims over your life which Christ makes; but have you no opinion about the great purposes He seeks to accomplish in the world, the high ends He seeks to serve? And as you see Him go to the world's redemption, have you never thrilled to the tacit appeal to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty? You who may be instead of eyes, can you hold back ingloriously?[3]

The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar:
Who follows in His train?

[1] Hugh Black. [2] A. Raleigh. [3] Hugh Black.

Look and Live.

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Look and Live.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the standard: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.—Num. xxi. 8, 9.

[And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.—John iii. 14, 15.]

1. While the children of Israel were roaming homeless through the wilderness, their heart, we read, failed them because of the way, and, as was their wont, they vented their vexation in angry thoughts and rebellious words against God. On this occasion God sent among them judgment in the form of fiery serpents. The bite of these serpents was deadly, so that when a man was once bitten by their venomous fangs his life was forfeited, and, although he did not drop down dead on the instant, in one sense he was a dead man already. What a moment of agony and terror it must have been as all around unfortunate victims were being attacked by these messengers of death! In this terrible emergency the people cried to God, and in doing so confessed, "We have sinned"; and in answer to their prayer Moses was instructed to make a fiery serpent of brass and set it on a pole, and it should come to pass that, if any were bitten by a fiery serpent, on looking at this they would live.

¶ They did well, when they came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee." So far as I know, it is the only real expression of true sorrow and willing confession which we find in the wilderness story. "We have sinned." And if so, it is well worth while for us to notice, that this was the occasion for God's giving to them the great sign of mercy to which Jesus Christ pointed as a sign of Himself. So it is that God gives grace to

the humble, encourages the contrite, is found of those who seek.[1]

2. Recalling this incident of Israel, Jesus found in it a type and prophecy of Himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

¶ It is very instructive to notice the New Testament use of the Old Testament record of Moses. His history and its incidents are constantly referred to as illustrations and types of Christ. St. Paul again and again finds his illustrations in the life of Moses, and much more than illustrations. Not with any curious fancy is it that his sturdy logic finds the materials for two compact arguments in these chapters. The manna, the rock, the veil on the face of Moses, are all immediately connected with Jesus Christ. St. John, too, in the Book of Revelation, constantly finds here the imagery by which he sets forth the things which are to come. And the Church in all ages has found in Egypt and the wilderness journey to the goodly land a very Pilgrim's Progress. No type is more familiar, no illustration more constant. The arrangements of Jewish worship are full of predictions of Christ—living pictures of our salvation. The Lord Jesus is the sacrifice for our sins—the Lamb of God which beareth away the sins of the world. He is the Mercy-seat, as the word propitiation is rendered in the marginal reference. He is the High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him.[2]

¶ The old is always becoming the new. "As Moses . . . so the Son of man"; as the old, so the new; as the historical, so the prophetical. All the pattern of the spiritual temple has been shown in the mountain, and has been frayed out in shapely and significant clouds which themselves were parables. "That the Scripture might be fulfilled." History always has something more to do than it seems to have; it does not only record the event of the day, it redeems old subjects, old vows and oaths; it takes up what seems to be the exhausted past and turns it into the present and energetic action of the moment. As Moses, as Jonah, as Solomon, as the bold Esaias; it is always a going-back upon the sacred past and eating up the food that was there provided. Do not live too much in what we call the present; do not live upon the bubble of the hour;

[1] E. S. Talbot. [2] M. G. Pearse.

have some city of the mind, some far-away strong temple-sanctuary made noble by associations and memories of the tenderest kind. You could easily be dislodged from some sophism of yesterday. If you are living in the little programmes that were published but last night you have but a poor lodgment, and to-morrow you will be found naked, destitute, and hungry. Always go back to the "As Moses, as David, as Daniel, as Jeremiah," and see in every culminating event a confirmation of this holy word—"that the Scripture might be fulfilled." The plan was drawn before the building was commenced; the specification was all written out before the builder handled his hammer and his trowel; we do but work out old specifications—old, but not decayed; old with the venerableness of truth. See that you stand upon a broad rock, and do not try to launch your lifeship upon a bubble.[1]

We have here—

I. A Pressing Danger.

i. Death from the bite of a Serpent—"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (Num. xxi. 6).

ii. Perishing in Sin—"might not perish" (John iii. 15 A.V.; "should not perish," iii. 16).

II. A Way of Escape.

i. A Brazen Serpent lifted up on a pole—"Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard" (Num. xxi. 8).

ii. A Sin-bearer lifted up on the Cross—"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John iii. 14).

III. How to use the Way of Escape.

i. Looking to the Serpent—"If a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. xxi. 9).

ii. Believing in the Sin-bearer—"that whosoever believeth in him," R.V. "that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (John iii. 15).

IV. The Good Effect.

i. Life—"When he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. xxi. 9).

[1] Joseph Parker.

ii. Eternal Life—"that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (John iii. 15).

I.

A Pressing Danger.

The danger is—(i.) Death from the bite of a serpent (Num. xxi. 6); (ii.) "perishing" in sin (John iii. 16).

i. The Serpent and Death.

1. The district through which the Israelites were passing is infested at the present day with venomous reptiles of various kinds, and this seems to have been its character in the time of Moses. It is impossible clearly to identify these "fiery serpents" with any of the several species now known, or to say why they received the appellation "fiery." The name may have been given them on account of their colour, or their ferocity, or, inasmuch as the word is rendered "deadly" in the Septuagint, and "burning" in some other versions, it may indicate the burning sensation produced by their bite, and its venomous and fatal character.

2. The bite was fatal. "Much people died." It was no light affliction which was but for a moment, a passing inconvenience that wore away with time; no sickness was it from which prudence and care could recover them. Not as when Paul shook off his venomous beast into the crackling flames, and it perished there. He who was bitten died: old and young, strong man and frail woman. "Ah," said some of those who are always ready to make light of any illness unless it is their own, "he will get over it; he is young, and he has youth on his side." "See," said another, "what a splendid constitution he has; he will mend." "Come," said another, "we must hope for the best." But much people died.

¶ In October, 1852, Gurling, one of the keepers of the reptiles in the Zoological Gardens, was about to part with a friend who was going to Australia, and according to custom he must needs drink with him. He drank considerable quantities of gin, and although he would probably have been in a great passion if any

one had called him drunk, yet reason and common sense had evidently been overpowered. He went back to his post at the gardens in an excited state. He had some months before seen an exhibition of snake-charming, and this was on his poor muddled brain. He must emulate the Egyptians, and play with serpents. First he took out of its cage a Morocco venom-snake, put it round his neck, twisted it about, and whirled it round about him. Happily for him it did not rouse itself so as to bite. The assistant-keeper cried out, "For God's sake, put back the snake," but the foolish man replied, "I am inspired." Putting back the venom-snake, he exclaimed, "Now for the cobra!" This deadly serpent was somewhat torpid with the cold of the previous night, and therefore the rash man placed it in his bosom till it revived, and glided downward till its head appeared below the back of his waistcoat. He took it by the body, about a foot from the head, and then seized it lower down by the other hand, intending to hold it by the tail and swing it round his head. He held it for an instant opposite to his face, and like a flash of lightning the serpent struck him between the eyes. The blood streamed down his face, and he called for help, but his companion fled in horror; and, as he told the jury, he did not know how long he was gone, for he was "in a maze." When assistance arrived, Gurling was sitting on a chair, having restored the cobra to its place. He said, "I am a dead man." They put him in a cab, and took him to the hospital. First his speech went, he could only point to his poor throat and moan; then his vision failed him, and lastly his hearing. His pulse gradually sank, and in one hour from the time at which he had been struck he was a corpse. There was only a little mark upon the bridge of his nose, but the poison spread over the body, and he was a dead man.[1]

ii. Sin and Perishing.

1. The bite of these serpents was mortal. The Israelites could have no question about that, because in their own presence "much people of Israel died." They saw their own friends die of the snake-bite, and they helped to bury them. They knew why they died, and were sure that it was because the venom of the fiery serpents was in their veins. They were left almost without an excuse for imagining that they could be bitten and yet live. Now, we know that many have perished as the result of sin. We are not in doubt as to what sin will do, for we are

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

told by the infallible Word, that "the wages of sin is death," and, yet again, "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

¶ Sin can have but one ending—death—death—death. The soul that sinneth it shall die, so rings the warning of God. How foolishly we talk of it! When it is the child, we say, "He is young, and will grow better." When it is the youth, we say, "Let him sow his wild oats, and he will settle down." Ah, what cruel folly! What a man soweth, that shall he also reap. When it is middle age, we say, "Yes, it is very sad, but he has a great many good points, you know." And when he is an old man and dies, we say, "Well, we must hope for the best." And in upon this Babel there comes the terrible note of doom: The wages of sin is death.[1]

2. Is it always immediate? Not always. May we not play with the serpent? We may not. Are there not moments when the cruel beast is not cruel? Not one. The sandwasp paralyses the beetle with his sting that he may, and that his progeny may, profit by the paralysis. The sandwasp does not kill the insect, but thrusts a sting into him, not fatally; the insect can still lay eggs for the advantage of the progeny of the sandwasp. It is so with many serpentine tricks; we are paralysed to be used, not to-day, but to be eaten in six months. We are so paralysed that we will do this or do that and have joy in it and have a banquet over it, ay, a foaming tankard of wine that froths out its own mocking laugh. It is the sting of the sandwasp; it has thrust in that venomous sting and hung us up for the next meeting, for the next occasion, just before the bankruptcy comes, and the devouring of our very soul by those whom we have wronged.

¶ The worst consequences of sin are sin itself, more sin. Drink and lust mean stronger passion, more ungovernable desire. Anger and temper mean as their consequence a heart more bitter, more ready for more wrath. Selfish ways mean less power even to see when we are selfish or what selfishness is. Yes, and not only is there deepening of the same sin, but other sins are bred from it; cruelty, even murderous, out of lust and drink; cruelty, too, out of selfishness; lying and slander out of the hot heart and ungoverned life of anger. So it goes: sin breeding sin, sin deepening into more sin.[2]

¶ It is necessary to be ever vigilant, and, always looking on a

[1] M. G. Pearse. [2] E. S. Talbot.

trifling sin as one of magnitude, to flee far from it; because if the virtuous deeds exceed the sinful acts by even the point of one of the hairs of the eyelashes, the spirit goes to Paradise; but should the contrary be the case, it descends to hell.[1]

3. What was the sin the Israelites were guilty of?

(1) The fiery serpents came among the people because *they had despised God's way.* "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." It was God's way; He had chosen it for them, and He had chosen it in wisdom and mercy, but they murmured at it. As an old divine says, "It was lonesome and longsome"; but still it was God's way, and therefore it ought not to have been loathsome. His pillar of fire and cloud went before them, and His servants Moses and Aaron led them like a flock, and they ought to have followed cheerfully. Every step of their previous journey had been rightly ordered, and they ought to have been quite sure that this compassing of the land of Edom was rightly ordered too. But, no; they quarrelled with God's way, and wanted to have their own way. This is one of the great standing follies of men; they cannot be content to wait on the Lord and keep His way, but prefer a will and a way of their own.

(2) The people also *quarrelled with God's food.* He gave them the best of the best, for "men did eat angels' food"; but they called the manna by an opprobrious title, which in the Hebrew has a sound of ridicule about it, and even in our translation conveys the idea of contempt. They said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread," as if they thought it unsubstantial, and only fitted to puff them out, because it was easy of digestion, and did not breed in them that heat of blood and tendency to disease which a heavier diet would have brought with it. Being discontented with their God they quarrelled with the bread which He set upon their table. This is another of man's follies; his heart refuses to feed upon God's Word or believe God's truth. He craves the flesh-meat of carnal reason, the leeks and the garlic of superstitious tradition, and the cucumbers of speculation; he cannot bring his mind down to believe the Word of God, or to accept truth so simple, so fitted to the capacity of a child.

[1] "The Dabistan" in Field's *Book of Eastern Wisdom*, 121.

II.

A Way of Escape.

The way is—(i.) a brazen serpent lifted up on a pole; (ii.) a Sin-bearer lifted up on the cross.

i. The Brazen Serpent.

1. The command to make a brazen or copper serpent, and set it on some conspicuous place, that to look on it might stay the effect of the poison, is remarkable, not only as sanctioning the forming of an image, but as associating healing power with a material object. Two questions must be considered separately—What did the method of cure say to the men who turned their bloodshot, languid eyes to it? and What does it mean for us, who see it by the light of our Lord's great words about it? As to the former question, we have not to take into account the Old Testament symbolism which makes the serpent the emblem of Satan or of sin. Serpents had bitten the wounded. Here was one like them, but without poison, hanging harmless on the pole. Surely that would declare that God had rendered innocuous the else fatal creatures.

¶ That to which they were to look was to be a serpent, but it was to be a serpent triumphed over, as it were, not triumphing, and held up to view and exhibited as a trophy. Around on every side the serpents are victorious, and the people are dying. Here the serpent is represented as conquered and, we may say, made a spectacle of, and the people who see it live. Strong were the serpents in their power of death, but stronger was God in His omnipotence of life, and the life triumphed.

¶ The sight of the brazen serpent was as though God's spear had pierced the plague, and held it aloft before their eyes, a vanquished, broken thing. It was not one of the serpents; it was an image of all and any of them; it was the whole serpent curse and plague in effigy.[1]

2. How could a cure be wrought through merely looking at twisted brass? It seemed, indeed, to be almost a mockery to bid men look at the very thing which had caused their misery. Shall the bite of a serpent be cured by looking at a serpent?

[1] E. S. Talbot.

Shall that which brings death also bring life? But herein lay the excellency of the remedy, that it was of divine origin; for when God ordains a cure He is by that very fact bound to put potency into it. He will not devise a failure or prescribe a mockery. It should always be enough for us to know that God ordains a way of blessing us, for if He ordains, it must accomplish the promised result. We need not know *how* it will work, it is quite sufficient for us that God's mighty grace is pledged to make it bring forth good to our souls.

ii. The Sin-bearer.

1. It is strange that the same which hurt should also heal; that from a serpent should come the poison, and from a serpent the antidote of the poison; the same inflicting the wound, and being in God's ordinance appointed for the healing of the wound. The history would sound a strange one, and would suggest some underlying mystery, even if it stood alone, with no after-word of Scripture claiming a special significance for it. But it is stranger and more mysterious still when we come to the Lord's appropriation of it to Himself. The Son of Man, healer and helper of the lost race whose nature He took, compared to a serpent! Of what is the serpent the figure everywhere else in Scripture? Not of Christ, but of Christ's chiefest enemy; of the author of death, not of the Prince of life. Disguised in a serpent's form, he won his first success, and poisoned at the fountain-head the life of all our race. His name is "the Old Serpent"; while the wicked are a "serpent seed," a "generation of vipers," as being in a manner born of him. Strange therefore and most perplexing it is to find the whole symbolism of Scripture on this one occasion reversed, and Christ, not Satan, likened to the serpent.

There is only one explanation which really meets the difficulties of the case. In the words of St. Paul, to the effect that God sent "His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and for sin," we have the key to the whole mystery.

2. The "sign of salvation," as it is called in the Book of Wisdom, which Moses was commanded of God to make, was at once most like the serpents which hurt the people, and also most unlike them; most like in appearance, most unlike in reality. In

outward appearance it was most like, and doubtless was fashioned of copper or shining brass that it might resemble their fiery aspect the more closely; but in reality it was most unlike them, being, in the very necessities of its nature, harmless and without venom; while they were most harmful, filled with deadliest poison. And thus it came to pass that the thing which most resembled the serpents that had hurt them, the thing therefore which they, the Israelites, must have been disposed to look at with the most shuddering abhorrence, was yet appointed of God as the salve, remedy, medicine, and antidote of all their hurts; and approved itself as such; for "it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Unlikely remedy, and yet most effectual! And exactly thus it befell in that great apparent paradox, that "foolishness of God," the plan of our salvation. As a serpent hurt and a serpent healed, so in like manner, as by man came death, by man should come also the resurrection from the dead; as by "one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one should many be made righteous"; "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ," the second Adam, "shall all be made alive."

3. That serpent, so like in many points to those which hurt the people, so like in colour, in form, in outward show, was yet unlike in one, and that the most essential point of all—in this, namely, that it was not poisonous, as they were; that there was no harm or hurt in it, as there was in them. Exactly so the resemblance of Christ to His fellow-men, most real in many things, for He was "found in fashion as a man," hungered, thirsted, was weary, was tempted, suffered, died like other men, was yet in one point, and that the most essential, only apparent. He only *seemed* to have that poison which they *really* had. Wearing the sinner's likeness, for He came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," bearing the sinner's doom, "His face was more marred than any man's," He was yet "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"; altogether clear from every spot, taint, and infection of our fallen nature. What was, and indeed could only be, negative in a dead thing, such as that brazen serpent, the poor type and weak figure of the true, namely, the absence of the venom, this was positive in Him, as the presence of the

antidote. And thus out of this Man's curse came every man's blessing, out of this Man's death came every other man's life.

¶ My predecessor, Dr. Gill, edited the works of Tobias Crisp, but Tobias Crisp went further than Dr. Gill or any of us can approve; for in one place Crisp calls Christ *a sinner*, though he does not mean that He ever sinned Himself. He actually calls Christ a transgressor, and justifies himself by that passage, "He was numbered with the transgressors." Martin Luther is reputed to have broadly said that, although Jesus Christ was sinless, yet He was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because all the sins of His people lay upon Him. Now, such expressions I think to be unguarded, if not profane. Certainly Christian men should take care that they use not language which, by the ignorant and uninstructed, may be translated to mean what they never intended to teach.[1]

¶ There is a text (2 Cor. v. 21) which tells us that He "knew no sin." That is very beautiful and significant—"who *knew* no sin." It does not merely say *did* none, but *knew* none. Sin was no acquaintance of His; He was acquainted with grief, but no acquaintance of sin. He had to walk in the midst of its most frequented haunts, but did not know it; not that He was ignorant of its nature, or did not know its penalty, but He did not *know* it; he was a stranger to it, He never gave it the wink or nod of familiar recognition. Of course He knew what sin was, for He was very God, but with sin He had no communion, no fellowship, no brotherhood. He was a perfect stranger in the presence of sin; He was a foreigner; He was not an inhabitant of that land where sin is acknowledged. He passed through the wilderness of suffering, but into the wilderness of sin He could never go. "He *knew* no sin"; mark that expression and treasure it up, and when you are thinking of your substitute, and see Him hang bleeding upon the Cross, think that you see written in those lines of blood traced along His blessed body, "He knew no sin." Mingled with the redness of His blood (that Rose of Sharon), behold the purity of His nature (the Lily of the Valley)—"He knew no sin."[2]

4. The Serpent and the Sin-bearer were "lifted up." The elevation of the serpent was simply intended to make it visible from afar; but it could not have been set so high as to be seen from all parts of the camp, and we must suppose that the wounded were in many cases carried from the distant parts of the wide-

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] *Ibid.*

spreading encampment to places whence they could catch a glimpse of it glittering in the sunshine.

¶ Of the meaning of this there cannot well be any mistake. It denotes the lifting up of our Lord on the Cross; as St. John, in another place, tells us, that when He said to the Pharisees, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," He spoke, 'signifying by what death he should die." He did not mean merely that His Name should be preached in all the world, and made thoroughly known as the only way of salvation; He meant that He should be really and bodily lifted up. He meant His nailing to the Cross, and then the setting of the Cross upright in the earth. By this He became, more especially, the "scorn of men, and the outcast of the people."[1]

¶ It is the *lifting up* that is the chief point in the comparison. The word is mentioned twice—"As Moses lifted up the serpent, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." To Jesus, and to John as taught by Him, the "lifting up" was doubly significant. It meant death upon the Cross, but it also suggested the beginning of His exaltation. As the serpent was lifted up so that it might be seen, we are compelled to adopt the same reason for the lifting up of the Son of Man. It is a marvellous thought, an amazing foresight. The death which was intended to consign Him and His teaching to oblivion was the means by which attention was directed to them. That which was to make Him "accursed" became the means by which He entered into His glory. His name was not obscured, but was exalted above all other names by the shame which men put upon it. The crucifixion was the first step of exaltation, the beginning of a higher stage of revelation.[2]

I feel a need divine
That meeteth need of mine;
No rigid fate I meet, no law austere.
I see my God, who turns
And o'er His creature yearns:
Upon the cross God gives and claims the tear.[3]

III.

The Acceptance of the Offer of Escape.

The offer of escape is accepted—(i.) by looking to the brazen serpent; (ii.) by believing in the Sin-bearer.

[1] John Keble. [2] John Reid.
[3] Dora Greenwell, *Carmina Crucis.*

i. Looking to the Serpent.

1. We are not told that trust in God was an essential part of the look, but that is taken for granted. Why else should a half-dead man lift his eyelids to look? Such a one knew that God had commanded the image to be made, and had promised healing for a look. His gaze was fixed on it, in obedience to the command involved in the promise, and was, in some measure, a manifestation of faith. No doubt the faith was very imperfect, and the desire was only for physical healing; but none the less it had in it the essence of faith. It would have been too hard a requirement for men through whose veins the swift poison was burning its way, and who, at the best, were so little capable of rising above sense, to have asked from them, as the condition of their cure, a trust which had no external symbol to help it. The singularity of the method adopted witnesses to the graciousness of God, who gave their feebleness a thing to look at, in order to aid them in grasping the unseen power which really effected the cure. "He that hath turned himself to it," says the Book of Wisdom, "was not saved by the thing which he saw, but by thee, that art the Saviour of all."

¶ They would try all their own remedies before they turned to the Lord. I can think that none would be so busy as the charmers. Amongst them would be some who knew the secrets of the Egyptian snake-charmers. In the "mixed multitude" may have been the professional charmer, boasting a descent which could not fail in its authority. And they come bringing assured remedies. There is the music that can charm the serpent, and destroy the poison. There is the mystic sign set around the place that made it sacred. There are mysterious magic amulets to be worn for safety; this on the neck, and this about the wrist. There is a ceremony that shall hold the serpent spellbound and powerless. But come hither. Lift up this curtain. See here one lies on the ground. "He sleeps." Nay, indeed, he will never wake again. Why, it is the charmer. Here are the spells and the charms and the mystic signs all around him. And lo! there glides the serpent; the charmer himself is dead.[1]

2. We can imagine that when that brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, there were some bitten by those fiery

[1] M. G. Pearse.

serpents who refused to look at this exalted sign of salvation, and so perished after all.

We may imagine, for instance, a wounded Israelite saying, "I do not believe this hurt of mine to be deadly. If some have died of the same, yet this is no reason why all should die. Surely there are natural remedies, herbs, or salves which the desert itself will supply, by whose aid I can restore health to myself."

We can imagine another Israelite running into an opposite extreme, not slighting his hurt, but saying on the contrary, "My wound is too deadly for any remedy to avail for its cure. Thousands who have been bitten have already died, their carcases strew the wilderness. I too must die. Some, indeed, may have been healed by looking at that serpent lifted up, but none who were so deeply hurt as I am, none into whose frame that poison had penetrated so far, had circulated so long;" and so he may have turned away his face, and despaired, and died; and as the other perished by thinking lightly of the hurt, this will have perished by thinking lightly of the remedy, as fatal, if not as frequent, an error.

Can we not imagine one of the Israelites demanding, in a moodier and more sullen discontent, "Why were these serpents sent at all? Why was I exposed to injury by them? Now, indeed, after I am hurt, a remedy is proposed; why was not the hurt itself hindered?" Translate these murmurings into the language of the modern world, and you will recognize in others, perhaps at times in yourself, the same displeasure against God's plan of salvation. "Why should this redemption have been needful at all? Why was I framed so obvious to temptation, so liable to sin? I will not fall in with His plan for counterworking the evil which He has wrought. Let Him, who is its true author, answer for it." We all know more or less of this temptation, this anger, not against ourselves, but against God, that we should be the sinners which we are, this discontent with the scheme of restoration which He has provided. But what is this after all but an angry putting of that question, older than this world of ours, "Why is there any evil, and whence?"—a mystery none have searched out or can search out here. This only is sure, that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"; and of the evil in the world, that it is against His will; of the evil in us, that

He is on our side in all our struggles to subdue and cast it out.

ii. Believing in the Sin-bearer.

1. The brazen serpent was to be looked upon. The wounded persons were to turn their eyes towards it, and so to be healed. So Christ, lifted up on the Cross, is to be believed on, to be looked upon with the eyes of our heart. "The Son of man" is "lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The Law could not save us, in that it was weak through the flesh"; through the corruption of our fallen nature, for which it provided no cure. It could but point to Him who is our cure, as Moses did to the brazen serpent. It could not justify us, it could only bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Justification by faith is that which was betokened by the healing of the Israelites when they looked up to the serpent. It justifies, because it brings us to Him, with whom to be united is to be justified; that is, to be forgiven and saved from this evil world, to be clothed with heavenly righteousness.

2. Trust is no arbitrary condition. The Israelite was told to turn to the brazen serpent. There was no connexion between his look and his healing, except in so far as the symbol was a help to, and looking at it was a test of, his faith in the healing power of God. But it is no arbitrary appointment, as many people often think it is, which connects inseparably together the look of faith and the eternal life that Christ gives. For seeing that salvation is no mere external gift of shutting up some outward Hell and opening the door to some outward Heaven, but is a state of heart and mind, of relation to God, the only way by which that salvation can come into a man's heart is that he, knowing his need of it, shall trust Christ, and through Him the new life will flow into his heart. Faith is trust, and trust is the stretching out of the hand to take the precious gift, the opening of the heart for the influx of the grace, the eating of the bread, the drinking of the water, of life.

¶ Looking at Jesus—what does it mean practically? It means hearing about Him first, then actually appealing to Him, accepting His word as personal to one's self, putting Him to the

test in life, trusting His death to square up one's sin score, trusting His power to clean the heart and sweeten the spirit and stiffen the will. It means holding the whole life up to His ideals. Ay, it means more yet; something on His side, an answering look from Him. There comes a consciousness within of His love and winsomeness. That answering look of His holds us for ever after His willing slaves, love's slaves. Paul speaks of the eyes of the heart. It is with these eyes we look to Him, and receive His answering look.[1]

¶ Faith is the keynote of the Gospel by John. The very purpose for which this Gospel was written was that men might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing they might have life through His name (John xx. 31). This purpose is everywhere its predominant feature. From the announcement that John the Baptist was sent "that all men through him might believe" (John i. 7) to the confident assurance with which the beloved disciple makes the declaration that he knows his testimony is true (John xxi. 24), the Gospel of John is one long argument, conceived with the evident intention of inducing men to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of all who trust in Him. The word "believe" occurs in this Gospel no fewer than ninety-eight times, and either that or some cognate word is to be found in every chapter.[2]

¶ A woman who was always looking within herself, and could not reach assurance and peace, was told she must look *out* and *up*. Yet light did not come. One night she dreamed that she was in a pit which was deep, dark, and dirty. There was no way of escape—no door, no ladder, no steps, no rope. Looking right overhead she saw a little bit of blue sky, and in it one star. While gazing at the star she began to rise inch by inch in the pit. Then she cried out, "Who is lifting me?" and she looked down to see. But the moment she looked down she was back again at the bottom of the pit. Again she looked up, saw the star, and began to rise. Again she looked down to see who or what was lifting her, and again she found herself at the bottom. Resolving not to look down again, she for the third time gazed at the star. Little by little she rose; tempted to look down, she resisted the desire; higher and higher she ascended, with her eyes on the star, till at last she was out of the pit altogether. Then she awoke, and said, "I see it all now. I am not to look down or within, but out and up to the Bright and Morning Star, the Lord Jesus Christ."[3]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 16. [2] H. Thorne.
[3] J. J. Mackay.

IV.

The Good Effect.

The effect is—(i.) life: "when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived"; (ii.) eternal life: "that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

i. Life.

It does not seem possible that so great a thing as *life* should depend upon so small a thing as a *look*. But life often depends on a look. A traveller was once walking over a mountain-road; it grew quite dark, and he lost his way. Then a thunderstorm came on, and he made all the haste he could to try to find some shelter. A flash of lightning showed just for a moment where he was going. He was on the very edge of a precipice. The one look that the lightning enabled him to take saved his life. A few weeks ago I was in a train after it was dark. The signal was put "all right," and the train started. We had gone a few hundred yards, when I heard the whistle sound very sharply, and soon the train stopped. Some one had shown the engine-driver a red light, and warned him of danger. It turned out that one of the chains by which the carriages were coupled together had broken. If the man who saw the broken chain had not *looked*, and if the engine-driver had not *looked* and so seen the red light, most likely many lives would have been lost. Here, again, life depended upon a look.

¶ The wounded Israelite was in one sense dead already, his life was forfeit as soon as he was bitten; it follows that the new life infused by a look at the brazen serpent was miraculous in its character. What have we here but a striking figure of death and resurrection? Not by any natural process of improvement or gradual restoration was the death-stricken Israelite rescued from his fate, but by the direct and supernatural intervention of Him who was even then, as He is still, the resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believes lives though he were dead.[1]

ii. Eternal Life.

1. Our Lord said, "Ye must be born again," and Nicodemus answered, "How can a man be born again when he is old?"

[1] W. H. M. H. Aitken.

Our Lord replied by telling him something more. A man needs to be born not only outwardly of water, but inwardly of the Spirit, and when he is so born he will be as free as the wind—from legal bondage—from the tyranny of sin. And to this Nicodemus replied by asking yet more impatiently, "How can these things be?" The answer that he receives is given through the speaking figure of death and resurrection, and if we desire a striking commentary on the figure, and a definite statement of the truth, we have only to turn to St. Paul's Epistles. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together." "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." Surely nothing can be more striking than the parallelism between the words of this passage and the symbolism of the scene that we are contemplating.

¶ Eternal life is the blessing of the Kingdom of God viewed as a personal possession. The description is peculiar to John's Gospel, but it agrees with the "life" which is spoken of with such emphasis in the other Gospels. According to them, to enter into the Kingdom is to enter into "life" (Matt. xviii. 3, 8, 9). It is not so much duration that is expressed by the word "eternal" as the peculiar quality of the life that arises out of the new relations with God which are brought about by Jesus Christ. It is deathless life, although the believer has still to die, "and go unterrified into the gulf of Death." It may be described as a life which seeks to obey an eternal rule, the will of God; which is inspired by an eternal motive, the love of God; which lives for and is lightened by an eternal glory, the glory of God; and abides in an eternal blessedness, communion with God. It is both present and future. Here and now for the believer there are a new heaven and a new earth, and the glory of God doth lighten them, and the Lamb is the light thereof. No change which time or death can bring has power to affect the essential character of his life, though its glory as terrestrial is one, and its glory as celestial is another. Wherever after death the man may be who has believed in Jesus, the life that he lives will be the same in its inner spirit and relation. "To him all one, if on the earth or

in the sun," God's will must be his law, God's glory his light, God's presence his blessedness, God's love his inspiration and joy.[1]

¶ I distinguish between Life, which is our Being in God, and Eternal Life, which is the Light of the Life, that is, fellowship with the Author, Substance, and Former of our Being, the Alpha and Omega. It is the heart that needs re-creation; it is the heart that is desperately wicked, not the Being of man. I think a distinction is carefully maintained in Holy Scripture between the life in the heart and the Life of the Being: "Lighten thou my eyes that I sleep not in death." It is the Light of Life we want, to purify or re-create or regenerate our hearts so that we may be the Children of Light.[2]

2. In the Revised Version there is a little change made here, partly by the exclusion of a clause and partly by changing the order of the words. The alteration is not only nearer the original text, but brings out a striking thought. It reads that "whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life." "May in him have eternal life"—union with Christ by faith, that profound incorporation into Him, which the New Testament sets forth in all sorts of aspects as the very foundation of the blessings of Christianity; that union is the condition of eternal life.

¶ A soldier lay dying on the battlefield; the chaplain speaking to him read St. John iii. When he came to verses 14, 15, he was asked to read them again; when they were read, the soldier, having repeated them, added, "That is enough for me; that is all I want."[3]

¶ There is a most impressive little story which tells how Sternberg, the great German artist, was led to paint his "Messiah," which is his masterpiece. One day the artist met a little gypsy girl on the street, and was so struck by her peculiar beauty that he requested her to accompany him to his studio in order that he might paint her. This she consented to do, and while sitting for the great artist she noticed a half-finished painting of Christ on the cross. The gypsy girl, who was ignorant and uneducated, asked Sternberg what it was, and wondered if Christ must not have been an awfully bad man to be nailed to a cross. Sternberg replied that Christ was the best man that ever lived, and that He died on the cross that others might live. "Did He die for you?" asked the gypsy. This question so preyed

[1] John Reid.
[2] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 63.
[3] L. N. Caley.

upon the mind of Sternberg, who was not a Christian, that he was greatly disturbed by it. The more he pondered it, the more impressed he became that, though Christ had died for him, he had not accepted the sacrifice. It was this that led him at last to paint the "Messiah," which became famous throughout the world. It is said that John Wesley got one of his greatest inspirations from this picture.

The Death to Die.

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THE DEATH TO DIE.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!—Num. xxiii. 10.

1. THE Israelites were now, after long wandering in the wilderness, on the point of taking possession of the Promised Land. Arrived on its verge, their numbers and their discipline, strengthened and consolidated by nearly forty years of hardship in the desert, struck terror into the heart of Balak, king of Moab. So he sent off messengers, chosen from among his princes, to Balaam; the distance at which Balaam lived, at Pethor on the Euphrates, serving to indicate the wide reputation he enjoyed as a powerful magician or sorcerer. These envoys were to persuade him to come and curse Israel, in the expectation that his malediction would destroy them. Balaam was nothing loth, yet before he went he would see what God might say to him. God appeared to him at night in vision, and told him that he must not go with the messengers, that he must not curse the people, for that they were blessed. Balaam obeyed; but instead of communicating to the messengers God's reply in full, he abridged it by merely telling them that God refused to give him leave to go with them. He did not tell them that God had emphatically declared that he should not curse the people, for that they were blessed. The Moabite princes, having received God's message from Balaam in this garbled form, garbled it themselves still further in repeating it to Balak. Instead of saying to him that God refused Balaam leave to come, they merely said, "Balaam refuseth to come." Probably they thought that the God who refused him leave was only his own avarice and greed of gain. So, at least, Balak seems to have thought, for, instead of being discouraged, he only sent a second embassy of higher rank, with richer gifts, who should say, "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee unto very great honour, and will do whatso-

ever thou sayest unto me: come, therefore, I pray thee, and curse me this people."

The spirit of avarice, awakened by the first embassy, had now got full possession of Balaam; and, therefore, though he made the most pompous protestations of his entire fidelity to God, and of the utter impossibility of saying or doing anything but what God commanded or permitted, he wound up with the lame conclusion that they should stay with him another night, to see what the Lord would say unto him more; in other words, to see whether God might not change His mind, like some weak mortal, and permit His prophet to pronounce a gainful curse upon His people. So God, who answers fools after their folly, who, in the strong language of the 18th Psalm, "with the perverse shows himself perverse," in other words, whose voice, speaking through the conscience, may always be altered and vitiated by a persevering determination to attend only to what we like—God permitted him to go with the messengers if they came to call him. Balaam made no further delay. He rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass and went with the men. But he was sternly warned, and he determined for his own safety's sake to say nothing except what God should say to him. Still, strange to say, he fancied that by magical rites and sacrifices, in which the mystic number seven was twice repeated, he might prevail on God to change His mind. Thrice did he make the presumptuous attempt, and thrice was he obliged, instead of curses, to pour forth blessings. So he had violated his conscience to no purpose; he had made nothing by his wicked journey; the Lord had kept him from honour, as Balak told him with bitter mockery; he had lost the promise of the life to come, without gaining anything for the life that now is; he went back to his distant home ungraced and unrewarded.

2. As he uttered this prayer Balaam was among the mountain-peaks of Moab, and before him lay a deeply impressive scene. In the far distance in front of him were the hills of Ephraim and Judah, with numerous openings that gave glimpses of fertile plains and smiling valleys. Still nearer was the plain through which the sacred Jordan rolled—a plain some six or seven miles broad. Immediately below him lay the eastern hillside, covered

in part by a long belt of acacia groves. Among these groves he could see thousands of tents belonging to the Hebrew wanderers —the chosen of the Lord. In vain had he striven to draw down the displeasure of the Almighty upon them, and, now that he thought of their special religious knowledge, and spiritual advantages, he regarded them as "righteous," and felt constrained to give sincere utterance to his deepest wish: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

¶ The text occurs in the first of the prophecies or oracles uttered by Balaam. His eye ranges over "the utmost part of the people." Accordingly, after the repetition of the declaration that he cannot curse or defy, except at the bidding of the Lord, the leading idea which expresses itself is the idea of their vast multitude, dwelling apart from the nations, in "numbers numberless" as the sand on the seashore.

Num. xxiii. 7–10.—"And he took up his parable, and said—

From Aram hath Balak brought me,
The king of Moab from the mountains of the East.
Come, curse me Jacob,
And come, defy Israel.
How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?
And how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?
For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him:
Lo, it is a people that dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.
Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his!"

The parable, as a whole, is as simple as it is forcible. The only point which needs explanation is the connection with the context of the celebrated aspiration of the last couplet—suddenly introducing the conception of the blessing of righteousness after the mere contemplation of multitude and strength. That connection is probably to be found in the allusions made in the previous couplets to the separation of the people from all others, and the comparison of them to the "dust" or sand. It is hardly possible not to trace in these, signs of some knowledge, in itself most probable, of the great promises to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 17) and to his descendants: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore."

These are the "righteous ones." To them is fulfilled, in special fulness, that general promise of offspring from generation to generation, which ancient faith believed to be given to all the righteous. "Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great; and thine offspring as the grass of the field" (Job v. 25); "His seed shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed" (Ps. cxii. 2). Hence the aspiration of Balaam is that he may die as they died, full of years and honour—their last hour lighted up by the promise of seed as the stars of heaven—sure that the same blessing of God, under which they had lived, would deepen and widen out into the greatness of a magnificent future.[1]

3. The literal translation of the text is, "Let my soul (or my life) die the death of righteous men, and let my future be like that of one of them." The future, or last end (as our translation gives it) is a very general expression, and may mean anything that comes after. The authors of the old Greek version of the Seventy thought that the prophet meant his posterity, and have so rendered the word. But Balaam, it is to be feared, was too complete an egotist to have taken even that first step out of the abject selfishness which makes a man care for his posterity more than for himself. The common traditional interpretation of the passage is the truest. The selfish, worldly prophet did actually desire for a moment that, when he died, he might die the death of righteous men, and that whatever there be that follows death might be for him such as it was for them.

Let us consider—

I. The Righteous.
II. Balaam.
III. The Death of the Righteous.
IV. The Death of Balaam.

I.

The Righteous.

1. It is necessary to observe particularly what Balaam understood by *righteous*. And he himself is introduced in the Book of Micah as explaining it; if by *righteous* is meant *good*, as to be sure

[1] A. Barry, *Parables of the Old Testament*, 227.

it is. "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal." From the mention of Shittim it is manifest that it is this very story which is here referred to, though another part of it, the account of which is not now extant. "Remember what Balaam answered, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord"; *i.e.* the righteousness which God will accept. Balak demands, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Balaam answers him, "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" Here is a good man expressly characterized, as distinct from a dishonest and a superstitious man. No words can more strongly exclude dishonesty and falseness of heart than *doing justice* and *loving mercy*; and both these, as well as *walking humbly with God*, are put in opposition to those ceremonial methods of recommendation which Balak hoped might have served the turn. It thus appears what he meant by "the righteous," whose death he desired to die.

He serves his country best
Who lives pure life and doeth righteous deed,
And walks straight paths, however others stray,
And leaves his sons as uttermost bequest
A stainless record which all men may read.
This is the better way.

No drop but serves the slowly lifting tide;
No dew but has an errand to some flower;
No smallest star but sheds some helpful ray,
And, man by man, each helping all the rest,
Makes the firm bulwark of the country's power.
There is no better way.

2. It would be felt to be a prayer universally applicable, were it not for one doubt: "There is none righteous; no, not one. . . . All have sinned and come short of the glory of God!" It is true

that Balaam would feel no such difficulty. To him it was quite sufficient to be able to believe that some of the Jews conscientiously lived up to the rich heritage of truth they had received. That was sufficient to constitute them "righteous" in his view. But still the difficulty remains, that if we know that nobody is righteous the prayer becomes an empty mockery. But St. Paul himself supplies a cheering reply to this problem in the very chapter from which the above passage is quoted (Rom. iii. 2–22): "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested; . . . even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus unto *all* and upon *all* them that believe." Wesley puts the matter very plainly in his twentieth sermon: "Inherent righteousness is not the ground of our acceptance with God, but the fruit of it, and is therefore not identical with the imputed righteousness of Christ, but is consequent upon it."

¶ On Sundays we have attended the Welsh service in the morning, which we could easily follow, and the English in the afternoon. As there are four services in the day, the English sermon generally falls to some clergyman passing through, and they do not always fare well in consequence; for instance, ten days ago an old canon of Manchester, who preached, recommended us to keep regularly a journal for entering all our good and all our bad actions, and to take care to keep the balance on the side of the former, as we should then feel very comfortable on our death-beds.[1]

3. To Balaam's mind, however, as the context shows, the term "the righteous" had a special application. He meant "the righteous people," as they called themselves, the chosen nation. "Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" They were, indeed, a chosen people—highly favoured of God to receive the revelations of His Spirit, and called to be "Jehovah's servant," for ministering the knowledge of His love and truth to all the world. But even in the mind of the writer of this story they must have been distinguished rather by the possession of a purer faith, a greater knowledge—at least in some higher minds—of what was pleasing

[1] *Life and Letters of Fenton J. A. Hort*, i. 86.

to God both in worship and practice, than by their diligence in acting accordingly. This, at least, was the righteousness on which they prided themselves in later days, as in the days of St. Paul—on their supposed nearness to God, from His clearer revelation of Himself to them. We may well doubt the justness of this their own valuation of themselves, when we remember our Lord's declaration in the Gospel, that the servant, who knew not his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes; but he, that knew it, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. For, unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required.

II.

Balaam.

1. The judgment which we form of the character of Balaam is one of unmitigated condemnation. We know and say that he was a false prophet and a bad man. This is however, doubtless, because we come to the consideration of his history having already prejudged his case. St. Peter, St. Jude, and St. John have passed sentence upon him. And so we read the history of Balaam, familiar with these passages, and colouring all with them. But assuredly this is not the sentence we should have pronounced if we had been left to ourselves, but one much less severe. Repulsive as Balaam's character is when it is seen at a distance, when it is seen near it has much in it that is human, like our own, inviting compassion—even admiration; there are traits of firmness, conscientiousness, nobleness. He offers to retrace his steps as soon as he perceives that he is doing wrong. He asks guidance of God before he will undertake a journey: "And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me." He professes—and in earnest—"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." He prays to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end may be like his. Yet the inspired judgment of his character, as a whole, stands recorded as one of unmeasured severity.

2. "The object we now have before us," says Butler, in

a famous passage, "is the most astonishing in the world: a very wicked man, under a deep sense of God and religion, persisting still in his wickedness, and preferring the wages of unrighteousness, even when he had before him a lively view of death, and that approaching period of his days which should deprive him of all those advantages for which he was prostituting himself; and likewise a prospect, whether certain or uncertain, of a future state of retribution: all this joined with an explicit ardent wish, that, when he was to leave this world he might be in the condition of a righteous man. Good God, what inconsistency, what perplexity is here! With what different views of things, with what contradictory principles of action, must such a mind be torn and distracted! It was not unthinking carelessness, by which he ran on headlong in vice and folly, without ever making a stand to ask himself what he was doing; no; he acted upon the cool motives of interest and advantage. Neither was he totally hard and callous to impressions of religion, what we call abandoned; for he absolutely refused to curse Israel. When reason assumes her place, when convinced of his duty, when he owns and feels, and is actually under the influence of, the Divine authority; whilst he is carrying on his views to the grave, the end of all temporal greatness; under this sense of things, with the better character and more desirable state present—full before him—in his thoughts, in his wishes, voluntarily to choose the worst—what fatality is here! Or how otherwise can such a character be explained? And yet, strange as it may appear, it is not altogether an uncommon one: nay, with some small alterations, and put a little lower, it is applicable to a very considerable part of the world. For if the reasonable choice be seen and acknowledged, and yet men make the unreasonable one, is not this the same contradiction, that very inconsistency, which appeared so unaccountable?"[1]

¶ "Now and then," says Peter Rosegger, "I take my soul out from its cage. I smooth its wings and brush away the dust. Then I throw it up, to see how high it can go. It flies up above the housetop, it circles round and round. It settles on a neighbouring tree. It looks up, but the sky is so far. It looks down, the earth is so near. It is hard to soar, it is easy to

[1] Butler, *Sermons*, 97.

descend; and so in a little time my soul comes fluttering down to me, and creeps into its cage again. My hope is in the Holy Dove, the Spirit of God Himself, that comes down to earth and bears my soul upon its wings to heaven."

3. The story of Balaam may be entitled "a drama of the ruin of conscience." We are introduced to him at the crisis of his life. What had gone before we do not know, although we see clearly manifested in him, on the one hand, the tyranny of a strong besetting sin and, on the other, the helpfulness and strength of religious principle. He is evidently in the habit of seeking guidance from God, of listening to and obeying the voice of conscience. The message of Balak, with its offer of silver, and gold, and honours, is the turning-point of his life. The struggle between conscience and his besetting sin is most dramatically portrayed; it is a tragedy, ending in the defeat of conscience, in the ruin of character, probably in the loss of a soul.

¶ We often see two individuals in the same family, brothers perhaps, inheriting from the same parentage, brought up under the same environment, and living together until some great decision has to be made by each. The one decides for right, for God; and his life afterwards, while it is not free from struggle, and has its imperfections, is a steady progress upward. The other brother yields to the temptation, and though he makes, from time to time, efforts to recover himself, yet they seem to be unavailing, and he falls lower and lower until, perhaps, becoming hopeless and despairing, he gives up the fight. What made the difference between the two at the moment of trial? It was the life which had gone before: in the one, a life of fidelity to principle, to conscience, even in small matters; in the other, a life of carelessness about little things, as though they were too unimportant to be made matters of principle. In the first the will gradually became stronger and stronger to resist temptation, and so was able to make the right decision at the crisis of life; in the other the will had been weakened by many little acts of self-indulgence, so that when the great demand was made upon it, it could not rise up to meet the temptation, it yielded and never again recovered. The whole principle is summed up in our Lord's words, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."[1]

[1] A. G. Mortimer.

The smallest thing thou canst accomplish well,
The smallest ill. 'Tis only little things
Make up the present day, make up all days,
Make up thy life. Do thou not therefore wait,
Keeping thy wisdom and thy honesty,
Till great things come with trumpet-heraldings![1]

4. What were the motives which led to the perversion of conscience in Balaam? There are two opposite motives which sway men. Some, like Simon Magus, will give gold to be admired and wondered at; some will barter honour for gold. In Balaam the two are blended. We see the desire at once for honour and for wealth; wealth, perhaps, as being another means of ensuring reputation. And so have we seen many begin and end in our own day—begin with a high-minded courage which flatters none; speaking truth, even unpalatable truth; but when this advocacy of truth brings, as it brought to Balaam, men to consult them, and they rise in the world and become men of consideration, then by degrees the love of truth is superseded, and passes into a love of influence. Or they begin with a generous indifference to wealth —simple, austere; by degrees they find the society of the rich leading them from extravagance to extravagance, till at last, high intellectual and spiritual powers become the servile instruments of appropriating gold. The world sees the sad spectacle of the man of science and the man of God waiting at the doors of princes, or cringing before the public for promotion and admiration.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon death's purple altar now,
See, where the victor-victim bleeds:
Your head must come
To the cold tomb:
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.[2]

III.

The Death of the Righteous.

1. There are many ways in which men go out of the world. Some withdraw in carelessness and indifference, some in heaviness

[1] *A Layman's Breviary.* [2] James Shirley.

and fear, some without hope or expectation, some with a mere wish to make an end of physical discomfort, some hardened in frigid stoicism, and some in a maze of dreams, saying to themselves, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. There is another manner of departure which leads all the rest in dignity and beauty. It is the death of the righteous—joy with peace; a trust in God that rests on strong foundations; a heart confiding in a covenant promise which it knows to be certain and sure; perfect submission to the will which is evermore a will of love; resignation of self and all into those hands which come forth through the gathering darkness; sacrificial surrender gladly paying the debt due to sin;—these signs mark the death of the righteous. And to all this, since Christ came, are to be added the presence of the Saviour, the thought that He has gone that way before us and knows every step of the path, the conviction that to die is gain, the assurance that the Lord shall raise us up at the Last Day, and that whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die.

At end of Love, at end of Life,
At end of Hope, at end of Strife,
At end of all we cling to so—
The sun is setting—must we go?

At dawn of Love, at dawn of Life,
At dawn of Peace that follows Strife,
At dawn of all we long for so—
The sun is rising—let us go![1]

2. There was but One in this world to whom could fitly be applied the title of "the Righteous," our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and when we pray, "Let me die the death of the righteous!" it is like saying, "Let me die as my Master died, let my last end be like His."

(1) First, we observe that our Blessed Lord sets before us a new view of death. If on the one hand it is gloomy, if it tells us that death is the dire penalty, the necessary penance of sin, yet on the other hand it is not without brightness, for it tells us that death is the paying of the debt of sin, and is therefore the entrance into the land of everlasting life, that it is the gate of heaven itself.

[1] Louise Chandler Moulton.

"Rise," said the Master, "come unto the feast."
She heard the call, and rose with willing feet;
But thinking it not otherwise than meet
For such a bidding to put on her best,
She is gone from us for a few short hours
Into her bridal closet, there to wait
For the unfolding of the palace gate
That gives her entrance to the blissful bowers.
We have not seen her yet, though we have been
Full often to her chamber door, and oft
Have listen'd underneath the postern green,
And laid fresh flowers, and whispered short and soft,
For she hath made no answer, and the day
From the clear west is fading fast away.

(2) Next, we notice that our Lord teaches us how to prepare for death—that is, for a good death: "Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Our Lord teaches how to prepare that our death may be like "the death of his saints," precious in the sight of God. The fundamental principle surely is this, that none can die the death of the righteous who are not trying to live the life of the righteous. Our Lord's death teaches us, first, that we must follow His life. We cannot face death with the calmness, with the joy with which He faced it, "Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame," unless our life has been an attempt to follow Him—has been the life of the righteous.

¶ Those who have crushed out their higher aspirations, and lived a mere careless worldly life—without a thought of the Unseen Hand which was guiding them, without a reference to the Will of the Lord of their conscience, without any desire to be conformed to the image of His Son—will have little power or courage to grasp that Unseen Hand, and rest their souls upon it, when the senses are failing. Faith, affiance, trust, in the Unseen is not a single act: it is a habit of soul, generated by many acts, by constant acting. The "life of the righteous" is a life of faith. Without faith, without a belief, a trust, in God, how can the soul stand upright in the midst of life's storms, or stand firm against its "manifold temptations"? Even when explicit faith may have been lost or overshadowed for a time, what is every act of virtuous self-denial but a homage to the Unseen? The "righteous" then—the faithful—are "blessed in their death," with the same blessedness which they enjoyed in their lifetime.

There is no other possible. Infinite as is the Mercy of our God, and Great as is His Power, He cannot make the Past not to have been: and, remember, we are making it now that which it will be for ever.[1]

¶ The strong light which the teachings of Jesus have thrown on the Law of God, revealing its deep spiritual requirements—and not His words only, but His life and His death—have given us a standard which must, if it is realized, introduce penitence into our lives, not as a mere outward form or occasional service, or as a kind of composition for our offences, but as the spirit of our daily life—as the true temper of those who see their own baseness, selfishness, and coldness, in the light of God's pardoning, paternal Love. This repentance—a continual daily turning to God—will make the last, the inevitably remorseful last look at life from the dying pillow, less bitter, less intolerable, even for those who will have much in themselves, in their own course, to regret. But, if deferred till then, with what anguish will it come? Yes! penitence is needful—not to propitiate an angry God—not as the attitude of a slave, who crouches creeping to avert the uplifted lash—but because it is the right, the truly human, feeling for those who see their own inward faults and the transgressions of their lives. And but little indeed does any one know of the comfort and relief of such repentance, who would dream of putting it off till all opportunity was over of obeying the gracious words—"Go and sin no more!"[1]

3. Balaam envied the prospects of the dying Hebrew; but when we consider the blessedness of those who die "in the Lord," we feel that his old prayer is truer than ever. The earliest recorded example is that of St. Stephen. At his trial his enemies gnashed upon him with their teeth, but his Friend in heaven brought instant help.

¶ A minister of the gospel died at the early age of thirty-seven. Some days before the end, his wife asked him how he was, and he replied that he felt very ill, "but unspeakably happy in my dear Lord Jesus." The last day he lived, his wife repeated the familiar lines from Dr. Watts—

> "Jesus can make a dying bed
> Feel soft as downy pillows are."

The dying man replied, "Yes, He can. He does. I feel it."[2]

[1] J. W. Colenso. [2] J. A. Clapperton.

¶ On the thirtieth of January, 1646, Father Anne de Nouë set out from Three Rivers to go to the fort built by the French at the mouth of the river Richelieu, where he was to say mass and hear confessions. De Nouë was sixty-three years old, and had come to Canada in 1625. As an indifferent memory disabled him from mastering the Indian languages, he devoted himself to the spiritual charge of the French, and of the Indians about the forts within reach of an interpreter. For the rest, he attended the sick, and in times of scarcity fished in the river, or dug roots in the woods for the subsistence of his flock. In short, though sprung from a noble family of Champagne, he shrank from no toil, however humble, to which his idea of duty or his vow of obedience called him. The old missionary had for companions two soldiers and a Huron Indian. They wandered from their course, and at evening encamped on the shore of the island of St. Ignace. At daybreak parties went out to search. The two soldiers were readily found, but they looked in vain for the missionary. All day they were ranging the ice, firing their guns and shouting; but to no avail, and they returned disconsolate. There was a converted Indian, whom the French called Charles, at the fort, one of four who were spending the winter there. On the next morning, the second of February, he and one of his companions, together with Baron, a French soldier, resumed the search; and, guided by the slight depressions in the snow which had fallen on the wanderer's footprints, the quick-eyed savages traced him through all his windings, found his camp by the shore of the island, and thence followed him beyond the fort. He had passed near without discovering it—perhaps weakness had dimmed his sight—stopped to rest at a point a league above, and thence made his way about three leagues farther. Here they found him. He had dug a circular excavation in the snow, and was kneeling in it on the earth. His head was bare, his eyes open and turned upwards, and his hands clasped on his breast. His hat and his snow-shoes lay at his side. The body was leaning slightly forward, resting against the bank of snow before it, and frozen to the hardness of marble. Thus, in an act of kindness and charity, died the first martyr of the Canadian mission.[1]

Oh, safe for evermore,
  With never a weird to dree:
Is any burden sore
  When one's beloved goes free?
Come pain, come woe to me,
My well-beloved goes free!

[1] Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America*, ii. 75.

You are so far away,
  And yet have come so near:
On many a heavy day
  I think of you, my dear,
Safe in your shelter there,
Christ's hand upon your hair.[1]

IV.

The Death of Balaam.

1. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Was ever prayer more beautiful than this? Was ever answer to prayer sadder? Falstaff "babbling o' green fields," the old backslider trying to grope his way in the dark to the green pasture of the 23rd Psalm, is a less tragic sight than Balaam's headless form huddled among the heap of Midian's dead.

2. Foiled in his attempt to procure a curse on Israel by means of sacrifices and incantations, Balaam, as we are told in the Apocalypse, tried to effect his end by indirect and yet more devilish means. Purity of mind and body, and freedom from idolatry, were the very conditions on which Israel enjoyed the Divine favour. If they could be tempted to anything at variance with these, their doom was sealed. So reasoned the prophet, and applying his very knowledge of God to the service of the devil, he taught Balak his vile secret. If he could seduce the Israelites to commit fornication, and to join in the unhallowed sacrifices of the lewd god of Peor, they might still be ruined. The 25th chapter of Numbers shows the partial success of this infernal artifice. And when we take it in connexion with the brief notice in a subsequent passage, that in warring with Moab they slew Balaam also, the son of Beor, with the sword, we are driven to suppose that, after returning home to Pethor unsuccessful in the first instance, Balaam had actually gone back to Balak, to induce him to try seduction on those against whom magic had been powerless; that he had awaited there the issue of his vile suggestions, and had at length died in arms, fighting against the nation whose only offence against him had been that God had not allowed him

[1] Katharine Tynan Hinkson.

to pronounce a lucrative curse upon them. And this was the end of the man who had said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" In all history there is no more signal instance of the literal fulfilment of the most fearful imprecation that ever was conceived or uttered: "Let his prayer be turned into sin!"

¶ There was a noble soul that strove to become the man, but another soul, light, vain, and lustful, throve meanwhile; and in the reaction that followed the great scene upon the hills, it sprang forward at the head of its train of passions and overthrew the man of God in Balaam, "and Balaam the son of Beor they slew with the sword." "Lust dwells hard by hate." The soul that had now become the man naturally hated the people of the law, and so he sank swiftly from sin to sin, till he was found at last among the heathen dead.[1]

3. What are the lessons of the death of Balaam? Chiefly these two: First, that no man should expect to die the death of the righteous who does not live the life of the righteous; and, second, that wishes, however earnest, do not necessarily bring the thing wished for.

(1) Why should any one expect to come to a good death who will not lead a good life? This world is not governed by chance, or fate, or caprice. Surely there is a Righteous Ruler among us; and He rules by just and equitable laws. More than this may we say: that there is a unity or a oneness, in the various parts of God's world, of such a kind, that, by looking at what *is* in one place, we can tell what *must be* in another. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." The Lord was speaking of trees and shrubs and plants; in reality He was talking, in a figure, about the souls and the lives of men. If the life has been hard, sharp, and angry, and such that a bramble-bush is its proper emblem; if a man has permitted his sins, like thick weeds, to choke the seed of spiritual life, what sense is there in looking for mellowness, and fruitage, and pleasant, profitable things in him when the summer is past and the autumn days are come?

(2) Balaam wished that he might die the death of the

[1] J. M. Gibbon.

righteous. And in every such wish some things are implied the presence of which is better than their absence. There is first a knowledge of good. The man who so speaks knows something at least (as Balaam said) of the knowledge of the Most High. Again, the honest utterance of such a wish implies that, as there is knowledge in the understanding, so is there also life in the conscience. And yet how far was his wish from being fulfilled. Balaam knew well that he who would die the death of the righteous must first be righteous—must first have lived the life of the righteous. Conscious, as in his inmost soul he must have been, that he was at present far from that righteousness, that the whole bent of his heart was evil, that he was under the dominion of one overmastering passion which alone and of itself was turning all his religion into practical hypocrisy, he should have set himself with determined resolution to unravel this web of deceit, to retrace his crooked steps, to seek that straight and narrow way from which he had so long and so obstinately wandered, to lay afresh the very foundations of his spiritual being, and become that which heretofore he had been satisfied to seem. He knew well that the distinction between the last end of the righteous and of the wicked is no arbitrary difference, but the equitable, the natural result of a long course of voluntary acts. To wish for the death, without resolving to live the life, of the righteous, is to dream of an effect without a cause, of a harvest without a seed-time.

4. As for death-bed repentances, or late conversions, about which it would seem that no one could speak with too great caution, or too severe a reserve, men talk of them with a boldness which is effrontery. Who knows anything about the worth of such changes? Are they really changes? If he who at his last hour calls on God and professes repentance and faith, were to recover, who can say that he would not forget it all, and straightway go back to his old ways? Men have done so in a thousand cases: would they not always do so? Is it repentance to cease from sinning only when the power of sinning has gone? Is it not a mockery to style it repentance, when it is not the man who forsakes his sins, but his sins that

forsake the man? What is that conversion which a man professes, when the nerves are unstrung, the frame prostrated, the mind enfeebled, the functions in disorder, the power to think, meditate, and pray reduced to a minimum by restlessness, fever, and pain? Whatever may come of this in another world, one thing is certain: The Gospel, rightly understood, holds out no hope to delay. God promises pardon to the penitent, but not a morrow to the procrastinator; and as for those theories which make void the simple teachings of Christ, and promise to show us full ripe clusters of grapes on the bitter bramble and luscious figs on the thistle, they are but inventions of men. Reason and revelation have but one voice: both warn against rash boasting, in cases where the life has not been that which a Christian man ought to live. The solitary instance in Scripture of a dying sinner's repentance shakes not the weight of the general argument. Our Lord, on His cross, pardoned one of the two that hung beside Him; nay, He said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." But the case stands alone. One such man was pardoned, that we might hope: one such only, lest we should presume. God showed His power; but He also at once withdrew and hid His hand, lest men should make a rule of an exception and boldly continue in sin.

Sin the Detective.

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Sin the Detective.

Be sure your sin will find you out.—Num. xxxii. 23.

1. When the children of Israel arrived at the kingdom of Moab, on the eastern bank of the Jordan, they found large tracts of pasture-land especially suited to the tribes who were rich in flocks, like the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh. These tribes begged Eleazar the priest to obtain from Moses permission for them to settle there permanently. But Moses answered with indignation, "Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?" He reminded them how the cowardice of the spies had before brought down on the nation the anger of the Lord. The men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh told him that they had no intention of deserting their brethren. They only wanted to settle their wives and daughters in the land, and then the men of war would go and fight the battles of the other tribes. Moses was content with the answer, and assigned them the land they wanted; but he gave them a warning to keep their promise: to abandon their brethren was to sin against God. And he added the words of the text—words which go to the heart of every reader as direct as any in the Bible—"Be sure your sin will find you out."

¶ This is one of those passages in the inspired writings which, though introduced on a particular occasion and with a limited meaning, express a general truth, such as we seem at once to feel as being far greater than the context requires, and which we use apart from it. Moses warned the Reubenites and the Gadites, that if they, who had already been allotted their inheritance, did not assist their brethren in gaining theirs, their sin would find them out, or be visited on them. And, while he so spoke, He who spoke through him, God, the Holy Spirit, conveyed, as we believe, a deeper meaning under his words, for the edification of His Church to the end; viz. he intimated that great law of God's governance, to which all who study that governance will bear witness, that sin is ever followed by punishment. Day and night

follow each other not more surely than punishment comes upon sin. Whether the sin be great or little, momentary or habitual, wilful or through infirmity, its own peculiar punishment seems, according to the law of nature, to follow, as far as our experience of that law carries us,—sooner or later, lighter or heavier, as the case may be.[1]

2. The truth of the text is that our sin will not be done with us when we are done with it; that, however short a time we give to sin, however hastily we flee from it, however skilfully cover our retreat by plunging into a thicket of engagements and good deeds, our sin will track and dog us through every turn of life until it finds us out and pulls us down and compels us to understand that every evil done is evil to him who did it.

¶ It is strange, at first sight, that those texts which warn men that their sins will be punished in this life are just the most unpleasant texts in the whole Bible; that men shrink from them more, and shut their eyes to them more than they do to those texts which threaten them with hell-fire and everlasting death. Strange! that men should be more afraid of being punished in this life for a few years than in the life to come for ever and ever; —and yet not strange if we consider; for to worldly and sinful souls, that life after death and the flames of hell seem quite distant and dim—things of which they know little and believe less, while this world they *do* know, and are quite certain that its good things are pleasant and its bad things unpleasant, and they are thoroughly afraid of losing *them*.[2]

I.

The Detection of Sin.

Every sin brings its punishment. This is a matter of Divine law. It is inflexible. There has never been any deviation from it, and it was scepticism respecting this law that ruined the world. Satan circumvented our first parents—he caused Eve to doubt the reality of this fact: "Ye shall not surely die." He denied the inflexible law, that he who sins must suffer.

1. The text does not say *when* our sin will be detected. It does not say, "Be sure your sin will find you out *at once*." It says, "Be sure your sin *will* find you out"—if not in life, yet

[1] J. H. Newman. [2] C. Kingsley.

ultimately. It is only a question of time, nothing else. When travelling in Switzerland one is often interested in observing what a space of time frequently elapses between the shout you raise and the echo which comes back from the distant mountain-tops. You cry, "Ho!" There is a dead silence, and you think your voice is lost in the space. Oh no. Those waves of sound are travelling, and, if you wait, the voice will come back again, and by and by the mountain-heads fling back, "Ho! Ho!" and you find that, after all, it was only a question of time. Your own voice was bound to return to you.

¶ "My Lord Cardinal," said the unhappy French queen to Richelieu, "God does not pay at the end of every week; but at the last *He pays.*"

¶ In 1693, Louis XIV. of France destroyed the tombs of the emperors at Spiers by the hand of an officer named Hentz; and on the very same day in 1793—exactly one hundred years afterwards—by one Hentz, the representative of the people, the tombs of the French kings at St. Denis were broken open, and the ashes of Louis XIV. were the first to be scattered to the winds.[1]

2. The text says that, whether late or soon, detection is sure. There is something about these words which we cannot get away from. We know, of course, that in highly civilized countries, with the most complete police machinery, a large amount of crime escapes detection. In less civilized earlier times, when communication was difficult, the amount of undetected crime must have been infinitely greater. If we leave our crimes and think of lesser sins and offences—such as thieving, untruth, sins of the flesh—there must be a large amount in every community which the eye of man fails to detect and his hand to punish. For one forgery which is discovered and punished there are thousands of cases of adulteration and trade deceptions which are not only unpunished but unsuspected. And indeed it is obvious, from a cursory glance at life, that God did not intend all our offences and shortcomings to be detected and punished by mankind. There would be no freedom of action, no freedom of development, no independence of character, if it were not so. But we cannot on that account escape from the consequences of sinning. Moses does not say that the sin of these tribes would

[1] J. Wells.

be detected. There was no reason to say so. It would be clear and palpable enough. Men could not settle down in selfish comfort and refuse to fight their country's battles in secret. They must do it openly and before all eyes. But their conduct would not escape punishment, even if it were not revenged by their fellow-tribes. It would find them out, and work its consequences. It would cut them off from sympathy and union with their nation. They would cease to be Israelites and part of a great people.

¶ The difference between the committal of a crime and the punishment which the community inflicts through its judges and its courts, and the committal of a sin and the punishment which follows, is both great and deep. A crime is not necessarily the same thing as a sin; it often is, because God is revealing Himself in the progressive life of humanity; and accordingly the laws which govern the community and which are therefore expressions of its life, may also be partial expressions of the nature and the will of God; but in committing a crime a man puts himself over against the community; in committing a sin, he puts himself over against God. A man may break the law of the community without breaking also the law of God. There is another difference. A crime may be undetected, and therefore unpunished; all the vigilance and the machinery of the law may be unable to bring a criminal to justice. But even those of us who do not understand how it works out, have an unerring instinct of the truth that all sin is and must be punished, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen. Because we have thought that such punishment for sin does not follow in this life, we have got into the way of postulating a future hell in which those punishments shall be exacted, measure for measure, and from which none shall come forth until he has paid the last farthing.[1]

¶ In Greek history we read of a man named Ibycus who lived five centuries before the birth of Christ, and was a popular poet in his own generation. While travelling through an unfrequented region near Corinth, he was set upon by a band of robbers and mortally wounded. As he was on the point of expiring he saw a flock of cranes that happened just then to be flying overhead, and in the absence of any human helper, he called aloud with his last breath upon those birds of the air to avenge his cruel death. Not long afterwards there was a great gathering in the theatre of Corinth, which, like all the theatres of ancient Greece, stood open to the sky. Among the crowd sat

[1] E. W. Lewis.

one of the murderers of Ibycus. The drama was going on, when suddenly a flock of cranes appeared on the horizon. They drew nearer and nearer until at last they seemed to stop and hover in the air above the heads of the audience. The conscience-stricken murderer, seized with terror, instinctively exclaimed, "Behold the avengers of Ibycus!" His words were overheard, and he was seized and put on trial. He confessed the guilt of himself and his accomplices, and all of them were sentenced to death.[1]

¶ The ancients said that Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, was slow in her movements, being lame of her feet; but though she was slow, she never failed to catch her victim, for while he was sleeping she was still pursuing. And they believed that nature herself—the very birds of the air, the very waves of the sea, the very trees of the wood, the very stones of the street—would cry aloud to prevent a crime from being concealed. In Hood's powerful ballad, "The Dream of Eugene Aram," which is founded on an actual case, we have a kind of allegory of this very truth. Eugene Aram had murdered a man and cast his body into the river—"A sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." Next morning he visited the place, and this was what he saw—

I sought the black accursèd pool
With a wild misgiving eye;
And I saw the Dead in the river-bed,
For the faithless stream was dry!

Upon this he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves; but now a mighty wind swept through the wood, and once more laid his secret bare before the eyes of the sun.

Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep;
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep!
Or land, or sea, though he should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.

¶ In the year 1800, France being then at war with us, a Danish vessel, suspected of being in the French service, was captured at Kingston, West Indies. But the charge could not be proved. The sailors of the warship *Abergavenny*, then at the same station, were amusing themselves with catching sharks. On opening a shark, they found in its maw a pocket-book containing

[1] J. C. Lambert.

bills of lading which proved that the captured vessel belonged to the enemy. The captain when pursued had thrown his pocket-book into the sea, and the shark had devoured it. The captain's sin found him out through the maw of the shark, and his ship became a British prize.[1]

¶ There is a coal mine in England where there is a limestone formation continually going on. The water that trickles through the rock is fully charged with lime, and then, as the water drains off, it leaves a slab of pure white limestone; but as the miners are at work the black coal dust rises, and then falls again on this limestone, and forms a black layer. But during the night when they are not at work, the dust does not fall and there comes a white layer. Then the next day, of course, there is a black layer. And if the men keep the Lord's Day, and do not work, it can be seen, because there is a white layer three times as thick as any other. There is the whole of the Saturday night and there is the whole of the Sunday. The miners call that limestone the "Sunday rock," because you have only to look at that to tell whether they have been at work on Sunday or not. As their work goes on there is the record in the limestone.[2]

> The floods arise—O God! the floods arise,
> And wash my slain from out their burial sands;
> O hide me from the onslaught of their eyes,
> The frightful siege of their unhallowed hands.[3]

II.

Sin Itself the Detective.

1. The text does not teach simply that every sin will be found out. It is no mere general expression about the discovery of sin. Its meaning is particular and personal. It is, "Be sure your *sin* will find you out." That is a very singular expression. There is the idea of the detective. The sin is following the man—tracking him year after year; and then there comes a moment when it puts its hand on the man's shoulder, and says, "Now I have caught you." Be sure your sin will find you out. It is not a man arresting his sin: it is his sin arresting him. It is not a man discovering his crime: it is his crime discovering him. Here is a very successful sinner, who throws everybody off the track. He goes in and out among Christian communities, and

[1] J. Wells. [2] A. G. Brown. [3] Anna Bunston.

nobody suspects him. He moves in a good circle of society, and manages so to talk and so to act that no one entertains a suspicion of his being a hypocrite. Yet there is one who has followed the man like his shadow: there is one who has turned with every turning, and kept the track like a bloodhound of keenest scent. It is the man's own sin. It has tracked him everywhere, and at last lays hold of him with a shout of triumph, and says, "Now I have found you out."

¶ Hindered by opposing circumstances, counterworked by happy influences, delayed by time, retarded by distance, sin is an influence that works its way towards a man, moving on after him unseen, till it finds him, till it finds him out. In some shape it yet confronts him, and he recognizes it. He and it parted company in boyhood, in youth, a lifetime ago; and he thought it neutralized, dead and buried and forgotten; but it still lives, and will rise like a spectre beside him—it will find him out. It may not interfere with affection, with trade, with prosperity; it may stand beside all these in abeyance. And it may be just through these that it will find him out, as Jacob's did. Even individual sins, like Jacob's or like David's, avenge themselves; and, much more, a course of sin. Sin finds a man out in the usual recognized penalty; or it finds him out in the fear that it is going to find him out, in the unquiet, foreboding conscience; or it finds him out in the bitter compunction and sorrow for the wrong he has done, and the loathing of himself when he thinks of it; or—and this is the way to be dreaded most of all—it will find him out in the hardening of his mind, and the deterioration of his character. For it is vain to think that you can do evil, and reap no consequences from it; that you may commit sin, and have done with it. The hand of the dyer is not more certainly imbued with the colours in which he works than the soul takes on the complexion of the thoughts in which it indulges.[1]

¶ A man goes on, for years perhaps, and no one ever discovers his particular failings, nor does he know them himself; till at length he is brought into certain circumstances which bring them out. Hence men turn out so very differently from what was expected; and we are seldom able to tell beforehand of another, and scarcely ever dare we promise for ourselves, as regards the future. The proverb, for instance, says, Power tries a man; so do riches, so do various changes of life. We find that, after all, we do not know him, though we have been acquainted with him for years. We are disappointed, nay, sometimes startled, as if he had almost lost

[1] A. B. Davidson.

his identity; whereas, perchance, it is but the coming to light of sins committed long before we knew him.[1]

¶ George Eliot has taught this lesson more powerfully perhaps than any other writer of modern times. Again and again she shows how a single sin, committed long years ago, not merely bears its appointed fruit, but comes back at last to the author of it laden with these accumulated results, and casts them down at his feet, saying, "These fruits of sin are yours." The poor, shivering soul would like to disown them then; but he cannot. They *are all his.* His own iniquities have taken him, and he is holden with the cords of his own sin. He set the stone rolling, and now it has returned upon him. He broke through the hedge of the Divine law, and the serpent that was lurking there has bitten him.[2]

2. The name that is usually given to this detective power of sin is *Conscience.* Some sinners are never found out in the world around, they are not openly punished; but for all that they don't escape. They carry a detective within from whom they might escape if they could tear out their very nature. Conscience finds them out. And how conscience does worry the sinner with remorse! A fox was once caught in a trap, but in the morning was found only one of his legs. The wise creature when caught concluded that it would be better to limp back to his den with three legs than, having four legs, to perish in pain. He turned upon his leg and gnawed it through. That fox teaches us the exact meaning of remorse; for the word means to bite backwards, to gnaw oneself. Sin finds the sinner out when conscience devours the soul. That heathen New Zealander understood this, who gave back a shilling he had stolen from the white man, because of the "quarrelling going on inside him," as he said, "between the good man and the bad man."

> And now I can recall the time gone by,
> The pure fresh sky
> Of spring, 'neath which we first met, he and I,
> The smell of rainy fields in early spring,
> The song of thrushes, and the glimmering
> Of rain-drenched leaves by sudden sun made bright,
> The tender light
> Of peaceful evening, and the saintly night.
> Sweet still the scent of roses; only this,
> They had a perfume then which now I miss.

[1] J. H. Newman. [2] J. C. Lambert.

Yea, too, I can recall the night wherein
Did first begin
The joy of that intoxicating sin.
Late was the day in April, gray and still,
Too faint to gladden, and too mild to chill;
Hot lay upon my lips the last night's kiss,
The first of his;
I wandered blindly between shame and bliss;
And, yearning, hung all day about the lane,
Where, in the evening, he should come again.[1]

¶ Some of you may, like myself, have seen Vesuvius. Sometimes it looks the quietest mountain you can imagine. There are green slopes. There are people dwelling at its foot. The vine festoons its flanks, and all is loveliness. Yes, but wait a little. It opens its red mouth, and its crater vomits forth smoke and fire and ashes, and now down its flanks there comes the burning, glowing tide of molten lava. Hell seems let loose from its deep caverns. So it is with a man's conscience. It may for years be quiet and still, with perhaps an occasional murmur, faint and fleeting; but there comes a day when the sinner's sins confront him. Then does conscience do her work.[2]

3. What are the methods which sin the detective uses?

(1) Sin finds out the sinner, first, with *shameful memories.* The sinner may flee from the past, but he cannot alter it, and the waters of Lethe are fabulous. "Teach me," bitterly exclaimed Themistocles to the man who offered to improve his memory, "teach me to forget." Here there is no forgetting. The past always stands as you have made it. There are men who from the first have resisted temptation and refused to stoop to folly, who have lived a wise, honourable, aspiring life; but you are not one of these and never can be. If you have spent your youth in a shameful, low, animal, selfish, misguided fashion, no power on earth or in heaven can alter that. You can never live your youth over again. You know what it might have been, you know also what it is. However much you repent, however thoroughly you reform, you cannot undo that piece of your life and replace it with conduct you could now look back upon with pleasure. The shuttle you once so recklessly and eagerly shot across your life has woven into it a pattern which shall now for ever characterize your early life.

[1] Philip Bourke Marston. [2] A. G. Brown.

¶ Psychologists tell us that memory never really loses anything. Things pass from our consciousness and seem to be utterly forgotten; but they are only lying below the surface of the mind, ready to rise again into vivid life in their own time. Now and then we get slight hints of these mysterious potentialities of our being. Events long buried in the abyss of our forgotten years suddenly come back to us like half-remembered dreams. Some unwonted circumstance serves as the key to a secret spring, and straightway the locked chambers of the soul fly open.

¶ What worse torment could be imagined than to be compelled to remember all one's past sins, to be compelled to see them in their naked hideousness, to be compelled to acknowledge them in their far-stretching consequences as one's very own? Mediæval theologians pictured the abode of the lost as a vast furnace filled with leaping tongues of flame. Dante pictured it, no less awfully, as a realm of thick-ribbed everlasting ice, the breath of which was sufficient to freeze both body and spirit. But think of the state of a man whose sins have found him out, who has to say, "Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell."[1]

¶ A fine scholar once told me that he had done plenty of things to regret at school; but one only was a real burden to him. "Once," he said, "myself and some others had been doing something wrong, and the thing had awakened suspicion, and was likely to be discovered. I went boldly to the headmaster and asked him to put it in my hands, as I thought I could find it out if anybody could. He said, 'I willingly put it into your hands.' I need not say that it never was found out; but it is the only thing for which I was really punished. I am ashamed of myself whenever I think of it—and I think of it incessantly, and would give anything if I could tell the whole business to the world and be flogged for it." His sin was not found out, but it found him out, and stuck to him through life.[2]

What shall blot
The memories of bitter years,
Of joys which have been, but are not,
And floods of unforgotten tears?

The painful records graven clear
On carven rock or deathless page;
The long unceasing reign of fear,
The weary tale of lust and rage;

[1] J. C. Lambert. [2] A. W. Potts.

The ills whose dark sum baffles thought,
Done day by day beneath the sun?
"That which is done," the old sage taught,
"Not God Himself can make undone."

For that which has been, still must live,
And 'neath the shallow Present last.
Oh, who will sweet oblivion give,
Who free us from the dreadful Past?[1]

(2) Sin finds out the sinner not only by bitter memories of the past but also by *an unhappy and ineffective present.* It cripples and incapacitates us for present duty and enjoyment. In our past our present is rooted, and from it we are wholly derived. Let no doctrine of regeneration delude us into the belief that at any moment we please we can leap into a wise, virtuous, refined, godly character. It is not so. If we give entertainment to evil thoughts now, they will not be forbidden entrance when we would exclude them. If we accustom ourselves to look at things from a worldly, frivolous, impure point of view, that attitude will continue when we would fain be heavenly-minded. The child is allowed to become self-willed, indolent, sensual, passionate, crafty, and all the spiritual strength of the man is consumed in repressing these pitiful vices.

¶ When the drunken comrade mutters and the great guard-lantern gutters
And the horror of our fail is written plain,
Every secret, self-revealing on the aching whitewashed ceiling,
Do you wonder that we drug ourselves from pain?
We have done with Hope and Honour, we are lost to Love and Truth,
We are dropping down the ladder rung by rung,
And the measure of our torment is the measure of our youth.
God help us, for we knew the worst too young.[2]

4. There are two lines along which sins follow us from the past. Their consequences appear in our life or in our character. They bring misery or they bring moral degradation. Sins which involve transgression of the laws of bodily health bring visible retribution.

[1] Sir Lewis Morris, *Poems*, 102.
[2] Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads*, 64.

(1) *In our life.*—If there are any who think lightly of sin and who are encouraged in sin by an implicit understanding that no great harm will come of it, let them be assured that their sin will find them out. Higher thoughts will one day visit them, higher aims will one day win their spirit, a nobler view of life will present itself to them; and how are they to respond to those new and higher calls if their nature is debased by sin? "You do yourself incredible wrong. There are duties in life, social, domestic, personal, which you will despise yourself if you cannot discharge, and you will not be able to discharge them if in youth you do not act your part well and keep yourself unsullied by the contamination of sin. There are enjoyments in life for which sin unfits you. I do not speak of the highest enjoyments, but of natural enjoyments, *in the same kind* as those you now crave, and which are possible only to those whose conscience is laden with no evil remembrances, whose nature is contracted and withered by no familiarity with sin, who can give themselves to enjoyment with the freedom, fearlessness, and abandonment which are reserved for the innocent only. In vain will you strive to leave your past behind you. If you sin, then no more at all can you have that fineness of feeling which only ignorance of evil can preserve, no more that high and great conscientiousness which once broken is never repaired, no more that courage and wisdom which accompany an upright and steady career, no more that respect from other men which instinctively departs from those who have lost self-respect."[1]

¶ One of the shortest and most telling sermons I ever heard, was by a friend who had charge of an hospital. Going round his wards with him one Sunday morning, we came to a young man, whose secret sins had found him out. As the young doctor laid bare his hideous sores, he said in a slow and solemn tone, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." I felt as if I had been present at the last judgment.[2]

(2) *In our character.*—Some men's sins, as St. Paul says, go before to judgment, and some follow after; and these latter are the sins which we should dread, and which are the most baneful in their results. Such sins eat into the character. They necessitate duplicity. There is no real brightness in the life—no

[1] Marcus Dods. [2] J. Wells.

openness, no straightforward look, no real manliness. "O what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive." The incessant dread of detection falls like a pall over the life. The incessant necessity of concealment involves ever fresh deception, and makes the life a prolonged lie. The mind cannot be at ease; the thoughts are never free and disengaged; and this makes secret sins so injurious intellectually. Men of mark in literature have led dissolute lives, have been intemperate and immoral. No doubt this has had a baneful effect upon their work. It has made, perhaps must make, the highest work beyond their reach. He that would write an heroic poem, says Milton, must live an heroic life; but I question very much if any good intellectual work has ever been produced by the author of an undetected crime or the perpetrator of an undiscovered fraud.[1]

¶ A well-known theologian has argued against the identity of consequence and punishment in the following words: "Two men are equally guilty of drunkenness and profligacy. But one of them is a man of robust constitution: he has wealth and leisure. He sins and sins flagrantly; but he shoots in the autumn, hunts in the winter, and spends his summer in his yacht on the coast of Scotland or of Norway. The other has weak health, and is compelled by his circumstances to lead a sedentary life. The one, notwithstanding his vices, lives till he is seventy, and is vigorous to the last; the other is the victim of miserable diseases, and dies an ignominious death long before he is fifty. Where is the equality in the 'visible' penalties of sin? The eternal laws appear to receive the bribes of the rich and to trample on the helplessness of poverty." Such an argument is specious, but misleading. The consequences of sins against bodily health are of course counteracted by attention to the laws of bodily health. And if the sinner does not transgress these laws he will not suffer in his body. But this merely brings out more conspicuously the much-neglected fact that the chief punishment and consequences of sin must be looked for in the character. All outward disaster, all disease and wretchedness that sin works in the life, are but the outward sign of the ruin it works within. It is there the gravest consequences are found; there, in the callousness, the carnality, the cruel selfishness, the wholly degraded nature of the sinner that the true character and the lasting consequence of sin are to be seen.[2]

¶ Single sins indulged or neglected are often the cause of other

[1] A. W. Potts. [2] Marcus Dods.

defects of character, which seem to have no connection with them, but which after all are rather symptomatic of the former, than themselves at the bottom of the mischief. This is generally acknowledged as regards a sceptical temper of mind, which commonly is assailed by argument in vain, the root of the evil lying deeper, viz. in habits of vice, which, however, the guilty parties strenuously maintain to be quite a distinct matter, to relate to their conduct, and to have no influence whatever upon their reason or their opinions.[1]

¶ Some time ago a man came to see me whose nobler spirit had been awakened. He told me that he realized the beauty and the truth of the ideal; that a great longing had been born within him to reach to it, and to follow its gleam; but that the more he tried, the more was he conscious of an incapacity, which seemed to clog his feet, and fetter him to low things. He wanted to run the race and gain the prize, and he was trying to break himself free from the past, and lay aside every weight; but there seemed to be a weight which he could not lay aside; which clung to him; hampered his feet; tripped him up; baffled him; until he was almost despairing. What is the explanation of this experience? I found as we talked together that my friend had been in past years guilty of consistent sin; not gross sin in our worldly sense, but consistent sin; he had gradually formed a habit of choosing the lower; he never seemed to be any the worse for it; nobody ever found him out; but all the time, in the silence and in secret, his sin had been finding him out; and now it had found him.[2]

> Soon, the broken law avenged itself;
> For, oh, the pity of it! to feel the fire
> Grow colder daily, and the soaring soul
> Sunk deep in grosser mire.[3]

5. But it is always possible to evade the lash of conscience and ignore the loss of character as long as sin is spoken of generally. It is necessary to have the memory fixed on some particular sin, to have the attention drawn to some particular habit.

> I'm willin' a man should go tollable strong
> Agin wrong in the abstract, fer thet kind o' wrong
> Is ollers unpop'lar an' never gits pitied,
> Because it's a crime no one never committed;
> But he mus'n't be hard on partickler sins,
> Coz then he'll be kickin' the people's own shins.[4]

[1] J. H. Newman.
[2] E. W. Lewis.
[3] Sir Lewis Morris, *Poems*, 48.
[4] Russell Lowell.

(1) Take *drunkenness.* This sin always finds the man out. He may take never such pains at the commencement to be unnoticed and unseen. I believe all drunkards commence with very quiet tippling. Ah yes, but it is a sin that will find him out. It brings its own punishment. The sin looks out of his bloodshot eye, and grasps his hands until they tremble as with palsy.

¶ Of all the evils that oppress, and outrage, and destroy mankind, are there many, are there any, greater than intemperance? For proof turn to our gaols, asylums, police courts, lodging-houses, newspapers, streets, and our churches—yes, and our churches. It is an evil very great, very common, very real, very ruinous. It is an individual, a social, a national evil. It is an evil which produces an amount of misery, and poverty, and wretchedness, which no figures can possibly set forth. It injures the body, it blunts the finer feelings of the soul, it clouds the intellect, it ruins the health, it unfits for daily life. It brings poverty, it blights the home. It destroys peace of mind and the prospects of heaven. It dishonours our national name, it wastes our national wealth, it cripples our trade, it feeds our gaols and asylums. It kills directly 60,000 and indirectly 120,000 every year. It transmits its evil influence to succeeding generations, for the children of drinkers are injured in health. It is the chief highway *into* "darkest England."[1]

(2) Take a less obvious sin. Take *Resentfulness.* Suppose that a man is naturally resentful and unforgiving. He may, in spite of this, have a great number of excellences, very high views, great self-devotion to God's service, great faith, great sanctity. I can fancy such a person almost arguing himself out of his own conviction, that he is fostering the secret sin in question, from his consciousness of his own integrity, and his devotional spirit in the general round of his duties. His sin may have ten thousand palliations; it may be disguised by fair names; it affects the conscience only now and then, for a moment, and that is all; the pang is soon over. The pang is momentary, but the ease and satisfaction and harmony of mind, arising from the person's exact performance of his general duties, are abiding guests within him. He forgets, that in spite of this harmony between all within and all without for twenty-three hours of the day, there is one subject, now and then recurring, which jars with his mind,—there is just

[1] J. H. Atkinson.

one string out of tune. Some particular person has injured him or dishonoured him, and a few minutes of each day, or of each week, are given to the indulgence of harsh, unforgiving thoughts, which at first he suspected were what they really are, sinful, but which he has gradually learned to palliate, or rather account for, on other principles, to refer to other motives, to justify on religious or other grounds. Solomon says, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."

(3) Take that sin which is specially referred to in the text. It is the sin of *omission*, the sin of *not doing*. The children of Reuben, of Gad, and of Manasseh, are warned that their sin will find them out if they do not cross the Jordan in company with their kinsfolk, if they simply sit still in their own fields and vineyards on its eastern bank. And let us not forget what the Lord has said concerning the judgment in the day when He shall come in His glory. He tells us that in that day He will separate men as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; that He will set the one on His right hand and the other on His left; and that to those on His left hand He will say—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. These shall go away into eternal punishment." But who are "these" upon whom such a doom is pronounced? What had they done? They *had done nothing*. And that was their sin, and for that they are punished. Christ, identifying Himself with a suffering and needy humanity, says—"I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."

III.

The Entrance of the Gospel.

1. We are under a Dispensation of grace, and are blessed with a certain suspension of this awful law of natural religion. The blood of Christ, as St. John says, is of such wonderful efficacy as to "cleanse us from all sin"; to interpose between our sin and its

punishment, and to wipe out the former before the latter has overtaken us.

¶ The past is not, in any effective sense, irrevocable. We may yet make it, in large measure, what we will. For detached experiences are in themselves mere unintelligible fragments. It is when they are taken as parts of a whole that they have their meaning. And what is the whole of which our past is a part? Is that irrevocably fixed beyond our control? Nay, our past as well as our future shall be what we shall make it. It is a fragment that awaits interpretation, nay, awaits its full being, its true creation, from the whole.[1]

2. We are very apt to compare the laws of the material world and the laws of the spiritual world; and, when we detach some analogies, we are ready to identify the two. Happily, the laws of the one are not the laws of the other. If the laws of the spiritual world were the same as those of the natural world, we should all inevitably perish. Our sin would be beyond remedy, and infallibly find us out to its bitterest conclusions. If you touch fire, you will invariably be burned. If you cast yourself from a precipice, you will certainly be broken to pieces. The laws of the natural world operate inexorably. And, no doubt, just because we have a mental constitution, there are there also laws which operate regularly. But because one of the laws of our mind is that we are free and can will, and because we are in the hands of a great God who is also free and merciful, and can introduce a higher law than even the law of our constitution, we have hope. It is one of the laws of our nature, that that in us which we may call our self can be detached, as it were, from our nature, and set up against it, so as to resist it in its evil, and command it. And if this, which we call the self in us, be enfeebled through evil, and unable of itself to rise up against sin, the influence of God operating through the life and history of Christ can awaken it, and animate it with a Divine power—Christ dwelling in our hearts.

3. If it is a fact that sin has its punishment—if it be true that, go wherever I may, my sin follows me and will find me out—"How am I to be saved?" I will tell you. You have, first of all, to find your sin out instead of waiting for sin to find

[1] P. H. Wicksteed.

you. You say, "How can I do that?" Discover it by the law. If you have any doubt whether you are a sinner or not, run through the Ten Commandments, and then look at them in a spiritual light, remembering that he who sins in desire virtually sins in action. Then turn to the third chapter of Romans, and see whether it condemns you or not. Do not spare yourself. Drag your sins out of their hiding-places. Call them by their right names. Say to the iniquity of your heart, "Come, sin, if I do not find you out you will find me out. If I do not drag you from your lurking-place you will drag me into perdition." Out with your sin and judge yourself as in the sight of God. And then, when you have settled the question that you are a sinner, and a sinner who deserves punishment, go and take all the hideous load to Christ. This is the only way a man can be saved. Get your sins found out; and when you have seen them, though they appear like a very mountain of guilt, say, in the language of the hymn—

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God.

¶ The punishment of sin is inevitable. As sins against natural laws are invariably punished, as fire burns, no matter whose be the hand that is in it, so sin uniformly and in every case brings spiritual degradation. The laws of our spiritual nature are "self-acting," as are the other laws with which we have to do. No sin is committed without leaving its mark. But you say, "There is repentance." You know little of the power of sin if you thus glibly promise yourself repentance. Listen to the confession of one who has a foremost place in English literature, and who was not judged by his contemporaries to have sinned to any dangerous extent. "Of a change in my condition there is no hope. The waters have gone over me. But out of the black depths I would cry out to all those who have but set a foot in the perilous flood. Could the youth, to whom the flavour of his first sinful enjoyment is delicious as the opening scenes of life, or the entering upon some newly discovered paradise, look into my desolation, and be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will—to see this destruction and have no power to stop it, and yet to feel it all the way emanating from himself; to perceive all goodness emptied out of him and yet not to be able to forget a time when it was otherwise; to bear about

the piteous spectacle of his own self-ruins; could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebler and feebler outcry to be delivered—it were enough to make him dash aside the most pressing or subtle temptation." What can such a man make of repentance? Is he not more likely to class himself with those who seek it when the door is shut; who know that others have abandoned sin and have entered into life, but that they are shut out in outer darkness? Repentance is not at our beck; and to sin for a little longer in the expectation that you can repent at pleasure is a complete misunderstanding of the surest laws of your nature. Repentance is never easy, and every day becomes more difficult.[1]

Thy mercy greater is than any sin,
Thy greatness none can ever comprehend:
Wherefore, O Lord, let me Thy mercy win,
Whose glorious name no time can ever end:
Wherefore I say all praise belongs to Thee,
Whom I beseech be merciful to me.

4. What, then, has Christ accomplished for us? Does He stand between the sinner and the natural consequences of his sin? To answer this question we have but to look to the first sinner saved after His death, the thief who hung beside Him on the cross. What this sinner received from Christ was not immunity from the consequences of sin, but assurance of God's favour and of Christ's friendship. Of the natural results of his life of crime there was no reversal, no mitigation. Christ's power was not put forth to unfasten the criminal from the cross he had earned. There are cases in which this inevitable law is obscured. For in life much is sown besides our sin of which we reap the fruit, and sometimes by the foresight of friends or by the providence of God we are saved from the results of our own deeds. What others do for our good has its result. But the one thing we can calculate on is that we must reap as we have sown, and that Christ's work does not interfere with this law.

The work of Christ does mainly these two things for us. It secures us the pardon of God, and it creates a new spirit within us.

(1) *It secures the pardon of God.*—The pardon of God, though

[1] Marcus Dods.

it does not check consequences or reverse natural law, gives us very different thoughts about the consequences of our sins, and sets us in a new relation to them. The pardon of God carries with it restoration to His favour, but not exemption from punishment. A lad takes out his father's favourite horse and in trying to leap a fence breaks the horse's neck and his own collar-bone. Pained as he is while lying in the field he fears his father's anger more than the setting of the bone. And when he is taken home he is delighted to be assured that his father is filled with pity and readily accepts his contrite apologies. And the restored sense of his father's love, which his fault had clouded, knits the bond between father and son more firmly than ever. But this happy sense of pardon does not lessen the actual pain of his broken bone, though it may help him to bear it. So is it when we return from sin to God. His pardon does not shield us from the consequences of our sin, but it makes our whole being different.

¶ In the days of Cæsar Augustus there lived a great pirate, for whose head a large reward was offered. He said to himself, "I shall surely be caught, now that a hue and cry has been raised against me; Cæsar's warships are scouring the seas, and will hunt me down." He disguised himself, and got into Cæsar's presence, and claimed the reward for the pirate's head. "But where is it?" Cæsar asked. "Here it is," he said, "I am the pirate." He threw himself at Cæsar's feet, implored mercy, and offered to serve in the imperial navy. And he was pardoned. Be like him, except in one point. Do not disguise yourself, but tear off every disguise, and, confessing your sin, make the name of Jesus your only plea. Find out your sin, before it finds you out. Like the Prodigal, inform against yourself before God.[1]

(2) *It creates a new spirit within us.*—We find in ourselves new forces arrayed against sin, and these forces at once set in motion a new series of consequences and results which counter-work the results of sin. At every point the penitent sees traces of his sin, but every day the new life which Christ gives him is sowing for him seeds which will spring up in happiness, in service, in all that blesses human life. The new life which Christ gives does not at once abolish sinful tendencies, but it gives us power to fight against them; it does not on the spot emancipate us from

[1] J. Wells.

all the bonds we have formed by sin, but it communicates a hope and a strength which, we feel, will one day effectually deliver us.

¶ O my Saviour Christ, Christ my Saviour! who will grant that I may die rather than again offend Thee! Christ my Saviour, O my Saviour! Lord, let a new manner of life prove that a new spirit hath descended on me; for true penitence is new life, and true praise unremitted penitence, and the observation of a perpetual Sabbath from sin, its occasions, fuel, and danger. For as penitence destroys old sins, so do new sins destroy penitence.[1]

What shall I do? Make vows and break them still?
'Twill be but labour lost.
My good cannot prevail against mine ill;
The business will be crossed.

Oh, say not so! thou canst not tell what strength
Thy God may give thee at the length;
Renew thy vows, and if thou keep the last,
Thy God will pardon all that's past.

Then once again
I vow to mend my ways;
Lord, say Amen,
And Thine be all the praise!

[1] Bishop Andrewes.

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